

<b>Title:</b> <b>A Single County Court for England and Wales and the deployment of High Court Judiciary to the County Court</b>  <b>IA No: MoJ 070</b>  <b>Lead department or agency: Ministry of Justice (MOJ)</b>	<b>Impact Assessment (IA)</b>				
	Date: 2 February 2012				
	Stage: Final				
	Source of intervention: Domestic				
	Type of measure: Primary legislation				
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<b>Summary: Intervention and Options</b>					RPC: RPC Opinion Status

Cost of Preferred (or more likely) Option				
Total Net Present Value	Business Net Present Value	Net cost to business per year (EANCB on 2009 prices)	In scope of One-In, One-Out?	Measure qualifies as
£m	£m	£m	Yes	Zero Net Cost

**What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary?**

There are long waiting times in the County Court: cases (apart from small claims cases) took an average of 33 weeks from allocation to the start of a trial in 2010. This may be caused, in part, by inefficiencies in case allocation and transfer processes which can result in case hearing delays and customer dissatisfaction. The proposals within this Impact Assessment seek to address these problems by improving the processes by which cases are allocated to County Court. The proposals also seek to provide flexibility in the deployment of High Court judges to the County Court.

Government intervention is necessary because the proposed changes would require legislation.

**What are the policy objectives and the intended effects?**

The objectives are to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of case allocation processes at the County Court and to provide better information to court users relating to case allocation decisions. The intended effects are to reduce waiting times, to enable court users to make more informed choices over court location, to deploy judicial resources more flexibly in the future and to improve overall resource efficiency.

**What policy options have been considered, including any alternatives to regulation? Please justify preferred option (further details in Evidence Base)**

The following options have been considered:

**Option 0:** Do nothing (base case).

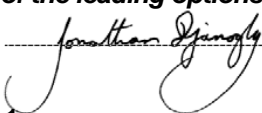
**Option 1:** Establish a single national jurisdiction for the County Court that would apply to civil and family cases and replace the current, multiple district-based County Court jurisdictions.

**Option 2:** Abolish the need for the Lord Chancellor's concurrence to High Court Judges sitting in the County Court.

The preferred option is to implement Options 1 and 2.

<b>Will the policy be reviewed? It will be reviewed. If applicable, set review date: 04/2018</b>					
Does implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?			N/A		
Are any of these organisations in scope? If Micros not exempted set out reason in Evidence Base.		Micro Yes	< 20 Yes	Small Yes	Medium Yes
What is the CO2 equivalent change in greenhouse gas emissions? (Million tonnes CO2 equivalent)		Traded: Not Quantified		Non-traded: Not Quantified	

**I have read the Impact Assessment and I am satisfied that, given the available evidence, it represents a reasonable view of the likely costs, benefits and impact of the leading options.**

Signed by the responsible Minister:  Date: 2 February 2012

# Summary: Analysis & Evidence

# Policy Option 1

Description: Establish a single national jurisdiction for the County Court

## FULL ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

Price Base Year N/A	PV Base Year N/A	Time Period Years N/A	Net Benefit (Present Value (PV)) (£m)		
			Low:	High:	Best Estimate: negligible

COSTS (£m)	Total Transition (Constant Price) Years	Average Annual (excl. Transition) (Constant Price)	Total Cost (Present Value)
Low			
High			
Best Estimate			Not Quantified

### Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups'

It has not been possible to monetise the identified costs, which is explained in detail in the evidence base. A qualitative description is provided below.

### Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'

HMCTS would face minor costs associated with changing case allocation processes and providing more information to court users, and there may be cost associated with additional transfer requests from court users, although equally there may be fewer transfer requests. County Court users may incur increased travel and legal costs if their case moves to a different court under the proposal, although this move would only be at the request or agreement of the court users, suggesting the net impact on court users from such moves would be positive overall. Legal services providers may also incur additional costs associated with increased travel, which they are assumed to pass on to their clients or to the Legal Services Commission if the case is legally aided. Again, it is also possible that these costs could fall as a result of the proposal.

BENEFITS (£m)	Total Transition (Constant Price) Years	Average Annual (excl. Transition) (Constant Price)	Total Benefit (Present Value)
Low			
High			
Best Estimate		negligible	negligible

### Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'

The proposal should generate minor efficiency savings in HMCTS Business Centres, which are expected to be negligible. It has not been possible to monetise the remaining identified benefits, which is explained in detail in the evidence base. A qualitative description of the relevant benefits is provided below.

### Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'

County Court users should benefit from being provided (at no cost) with court waiting time information, which should allow them to make a more informed choice over which court their case is heard. They may benefit from reduced waiting times and delays as a result, as might their legal service providers. HMCTS would benefit from greater flexibility in the allocation and listing of cases. The proposal may also allow future efficiency benefits in HMCTS Business Centres to be realised, although as any future measures will be subject to separate appraisal, these benefits are not scored here.

### Key assumptions/sensitivities/risks

Discount rate (%)

N/A

We cannot predict how many cases would move courts as a result of the proposal, nor the location of court users and their legal representatives relative to these courts. The scale of the identified impacts will be driven by any increased travel costs resulting from the transfer, any associated reduction in waiting times, and how court users trade off cost and waiting time. Given court users will have a better informed choice it is assumed that the net impact of all court transfers would be positive. It is assumed that the proposal would have no impact on the volume of cases being pursued through the County Court, or on the willingness or ability of court users to obtain legal representation.

## BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option 1)

Direct impact on business (Equivalent Annual) £m:			In scope of OIOO?	Measure qualifies as
Costs:	Benefits:	Net: Not Quantified	Yes	Zero Net Cost

# Summary: Analysis & Evidence

# Policy Option 2

Description: Abolish the need for the Lord Chancellor's concurrence to High Court Judges sitting in the County Court

## FULL ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

Price Base Year N/A	PV Base Year N/A	Time Period Years N/A	Net Benefit (Present Value (PV)) (£m)		
			Low:	High:	Best Estimate: negligible

COSTS (£m)	Total Transition (Constant Price) Years	Average Annual (excl. Transition) (Constant Price)	Total Cost (Present Value)
Low			
High			
Best Estimate	negligible	negligible	negligible

### Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups'

The judiciary might incur some minor costs as a result of ensuring that their own processes provide equivalent safeguards that judges are being allocated appropriately, given the allocation of judges may be subject to less top level accountability. These impacts are likely to be minor and any costs associated with the proposal are expected to be negligible. In 2010 only two requests for High Court judges to sit in the County Court were sought and we expect the number of equivalent requests to be small in future.

### Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'

n/a

BENEFITS (£m)	Total Transition (Constant Price) Years	Average Annual (excl. Transition) (Constant Price)	Total Benefit (Present Value)
Low			
High			
Best Estimate	negligible	negligible	negligible

### Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'

Improved listing arrangements as a result of a more effective judicial deployment in the County Court may provide ongoing minor efficiency benefits for HMCTS and the Judiciary. County Court users and legal service providers may benefit if more efficient judicial allocation resulted in reduced County Court waiting times. As above, these impacts are expected to be negligible, given the small volume of requests currently made and expected in future.

### Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'

n/a

### Key assumptions/sensitivities/risks

Discount rate (%)

N/A

The proposal may result in additional judicial transfers being made in future. However, due to the current low volume of requests, it is assumed that any future increase would not be sufficient to make the identified impacts non-negligible. It is assumed that the judiciary would provide equivalent safeguards as now that judges are being allocated appropriately. It is assumed that the proposal would have no impact on the volume of cases being pursued through the County Court, nor on the ability or willingness of court users to gain legal representation. It is assumed that the proposal would have no impact on case outcomes, on the perception of the justice of case outcomes, or on case duration. High Court judges would only be allocated to the County Court if available, meaning there should be no impact on High Court waiting times. The cost of judges in both levels of court is the same.

## BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option 2)

Direct impact on business (Equivalent Annual) £m:			In scope of OIOO?	Measure qualifies as
Costs:	Benefits:	Net: Not Quantified	Yes	Zero Net Cost

# Evidence Base (for summary sheets)

## 1. Introduction

- 1 This Impact Assessment accompanies the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) response to a consultation on reforms to the civil justice system entitled *Solving disputes in the County Court: creating a simpler, quicker and more proportionate system: the Government Response*. The associated response to the consultation paper will be published on 2 February 2012 and can be found at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/consultations.htm>.
- 2 The consultation response document sets out a series of measures designed to improve the experience of those using the justice system by improving processes and targeting cases towards the most appropriate services for resolution. They seek to ensure that there is increased ability to process more administrative work in the County Court, and to simplify the case allocation and transfer processes which determine the particular court at which a case is heard. The measures also seek to provide greater flexibility in the deployment of High Court judges at the County Court.
- 3 The aim is to provide a more streamlined, responsive and efficient civil justice system that better supports users. Where judicial intervention is required, the measures seek to ensure that courts are able to offer a range of quick and efficient services that meet the needs of court users whilst delivering an effective and proportionate route to justice.
- 4 The policies within this Impact Assessment relate to two measures outlined in the consultation response paper. The first measure seeks to amalgamate the separate district-based County Court jurisdictions to create a single County Court jurisdiction. The second measure seeks to enable High Court Judges to sit in the County Court without the need for a specific request from the Lord Chief Justice after consulting the Lord Chancellor.

## Background

- 5 In January 2008, the Judicial Executive Board (JEB) commissioned Sir Henry Brooke, a retired Lord Justice of Appeal, to conduct an inquiry into the question of civil court unification. In August 2008, Sir Henry Brooke published his report entitled: "Should the Civil Courts be Unified?"<sup>1</sup> In the report, Sir Henry Brooke concluded that while it was not necessary to unify the civil courts, there were a number of areas in which the administration of civil justice could be improved. He proposed a series of recommendations which included making changes to the administration of the judiciary by abolishing the need to seek the Lord Chancellor's concurrence to High Court Judges sitting in the County Court. The report also recommended that consideration should be given to whether the County Court should have a single national jurisdiction and whether it should be re-named the civil court.
- 6 The JEB endorsed this report and approved the recommendations. It suggested that the most significant practical benefit of a single national County Court jurisdiction, which would involve amalgamating the separate district-based County Court jurisdictions, would be an increased ability to process more administrative work through HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) Business Centres located away from court centres, and a simplification of the task of allocating those cases that require judicial intervention to the appropriate courts. The JEB also suggested that the abolition of the requirement to seek the Lord Chancellor's concurrence to High Court Judges sitting in the County Court would be welcomed as it would provide greater flexibility in the deployment of High Court Judges at the County Court.
- 7 HMCTS Business Centres have been established at Salford, Greater Manchester. They have been operating for several months as back offices for courts in London and parts of the South East and North West regions. The operation consists of money claims being passed to the Business Centres by the courts prior to issue, where they are processed on behalf of the individual courts. Subsequent proceedings such as defences or requests for judgment are sent directly to the Business Centres but as soon as judicial advice or intervention is required the files are passed to

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<sup>1</sup> [www.judiciary.gov.uk/publications-and-reports/reports/civil/civil-courts-unification](http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/publications-and-reports/reports/civil/civil-courts-unification)

the “local” court where the case then remains for case management. The aim of the Business Centres is to remove County Court money claims processes that do not require judicial intervention from the courts. This should be more efficient in terms of the resources used, might be quicker, and might also provide a more consistent service than if this was undertaken at local court level.

- 8 While the use of Business Centres has improved HMCTS process efficiency, there are further processes that could be improved. The proposals in this Impact Assessment consider processes that would be improved by creating a single national County Court jurisdiction, rather than the current multiple district-based County Court jurisdictions. Judicial allocation process improvements are also considered.

## Responses to consultation

- 9 The MOJ consultation document entitled *Solving disputes in the County Court: creating a simpler, quicker and more proportionate system: A consultation on reforming civil justice in England and Wales*<sup>2</sup> was published on 29 March 2011 and the consultation period ran to 30 June 2011. The exercise received 319 responses and a majority of those who chose to answer the questions in relation to the policy measures set out in this Impact Assessment supported the proposals.
- 10 The consultation paper posed the question: ‘*Do you agree that a single County Court should be established?*’. A total of 161 respondents answered this question, of which 136 respondents agreed that a single County Court should be established, and 25 respondents disagreed.
- 11 The majority of the 136 respondents in favour of a single County Court measure were legal practitioners. Others in favour included members of the judiciary and judicial bodies such as the Association of District Judges and the Council of Circuit Judges, regulatory bodies such as the Law Society and the City of London Law Society, representative bodies such as the Civil Courts Users Association, Association of Personal Injury Lawyers and Forum of Insurance Lawyers, businesses representative bodies including the National Farmers Union and the Medical Defence Union, Local Authorities, Mediators and Mediation Advocates, Academics, Citizens Advice Bureaus, financial organisations such as the Institute of Credit Management and the Cooperative Financial Services, members of the public, and HMCTS. In summary, **the creation of a single County Court was supported by the majority of affected parties**. The reasons given for support included that:
- there was no need to retain the geographical distinctions between courts in the present day and that the amalgamation of the County Court into a single entity could provide greater administrative efficiency and enable great improvements to the administration of justice.
  - the current “geographical and jurisdictional boundaries create inefficiencies”.
  - the current system is archaic, unwieldy and expensive.
  - streamlining the system would lead to costs reductions.
  - the proposal was a sensible way of making best use of reduced resources by ensuring that work could be distributed throughout the County Court estate, thereby helping to reduce backlogs in some courts.
  - the intended benefits of Business Centres are hampered by the need to maintain the individual jurisdictions of each County Court and that by having just one County Court, much of the current duplication could be removed.
- 12 The 24 respondents against the establishment of a single County Court included some legal practitioners, a Citizens Advice Bureau, and a landlord. The reasons given included that:
- the High Court and the County Court should be amalgamated to provide a single civil court instead of a single County Court.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-cp6-2011.htm](http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-cp6-2011.htm)

- the idea of having a local court is important to litigants because justice is likely to be delivered more effectively.
  - the current system works and a single County Court could be seen to reduce the importance of County Court.
- 13 The consultation also asked two questions in relation to the proposal to abolish the requirement for the Lord Chief Justice to seek the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor before High Court Judges may sit in the County Court. The first question asked: *'Do you agree that where a High Court Judge has jurisdiction to sit as a judge of the County Court, the need for the specific request of the Lord Chief Justice, after consulting the Lord Chancellor, should be removed? If not, please explain why.'* This question was answered by 153 respondents, of whom 151 agreed and 2 disagreed. The second question asked: *'Do you agree that a general provision enabling a High Court Judge to sit as a judge of the County Court as the requirement of business demands, should be introduced? If not, please explain why.'* This question was answered by 163 respondents, of whom 161 agreed and 2 disagreed.
- 14 Overall, the responses to the two measures set out in this Impact Assessment suggest that **businesses and court users are supportive of the measures proposed, as are HMCTS and the judiciary.**

### Problem under consideration

- 15 County Court cases are often subject to long waiting times before they are heard or tried. For example, in 2010 around 40,000 small claims took an average of 31 weeks from the date when the claim was issued to the start of the hearing. In the same year, around 20,000 fast and multi-track claims (these are claims for money other than small claims) took an average of 33 weeks from the date when the case was allocated to the start of the trial. Data for individual courts also showed that waiting times are long and vary with the average number of days between issue to hearing or trial. In some courts waiting times are almost double those in other courts.
- 16 One possible cause of general delays and backlogs in the County Court is that a judge may not be available to hear a case. Currently, High Court Judges may only hear cases in the County Court if the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor is obtained, even though the judge may already have the relevant jurisdiction. The requirement to gain the Lord Chancellor's concurrence means High Court Judges cannot quickly be deployed to hear cases in the County Court when necessary, particularly as it can take up to two weeks to secure authorisation from the Lord Chancellor. Transferring the case to the High Court is not considered feasible as earlier allocation processes have determined that it would be most appropriate to deal with the case in the County Court. In practical terms, moving the case to the High Court would involve the case going through the listing procedure of the High Court, which would take time.
- 17 Further, as set out above there is currently large variation in waiting times across the County Court estate. Currently, when a claimant issues a claim in a County Court, the court will stamp the claim form with the seal of the County Court where the claim was issued and send a copy of the stamped claim form to the defendant notifying the defendant of the claim. If the defendant does not defend the claim the court will enter a default judgement. If the defendant decides to defend the claim, the court will send the defendant and the claimant an Allocation Questionnaire and inform them that the claim will be allocated to the defendant's home court, or to the court of issue depending on the type of claim. Section B of the Allocation Questionnaire asks the claimant and the defendant whether they have any reasons why the claim should be heard in another court.
- 18 This provision gives court users an opportunity at the case allocation stage to make representations if they want the case to be heard in another court. If both parties do not agree on a particular court, the court will allocate the case as originally provided in the rules. If either party insist on having the claim transferred to their choice of court, they are required to lodge an application and pay a fee of £40 for a request to transfer. The application is then considered by a judge who will use discretion in reaching a decision.
- 19 Importantly, having separate County Court jurisdictions limits the ability of HMCTS to allocate cases initially, for example it may be required to allocate a case to court that has particularly long

waiting times in comparison to other nearby courts. Second, no information on local court waiting times is provided to court users to help them decide whether they would like their case to be heard at a different court to the one suggested by HMCTS. This lack of information may lead to inefficient choices or requests for transfer being made, or preferences not being fully expressed.

- 20 In future under the reforms, court users could still request transfer to a different County Court at case allocation, and if necessary could request transfer after allocation and pay the associated £40 transfer request fee, but the circumstances under which they choose to do so would differ (in particular their initial allocation to a particular County Court might be different and they would be presented with more information to inform any transfer request at case allocation, plus any subsequent decision to make a transfer application).
- 21 Finally, for each case being processed by an HMCTS Business Centre, there is a requirement to seal every claim form with the individual seal of the specific County Court being represented. This requires the Business Centres to hold multiple seals, which is considered inefficient because the Business Centres have to sift through over 200 seals to be able to identify the relevant seal for the court of issue.

### Policy objective

- 22 The objective is to improve the initial allocation of cases at the County Court, for the overall benefit of court users, and then to provide better information to court users to enable them to make better informed decisions about whether they subsequently wish to move to a different County Court, and if so where. The intended effect is for case allocation to become more efficient which may lead to reduced waiting times, for court users to make more informed choices over court location, and for judicial resources to be more flexibly deployed in the future.
- 23 Under the single County Court structure, when a claim is defended, HMCTS will be able to consider the most appropriate court that should deal with the claim: it will not be restricted to sending the case to the court closest to the defendant or claimant as now (which depends on the nature of the claim). In some cases, particularly in instances where there are particularly long waiting times, HMCTS will be able to consider whether it would be quicker to hear the case in other nearby courts when initially suggesting a court. This may lead to the court initially suggested by HMCTS changing under the proposal, which would be more efficient if court users prefer this court, given they would no longer need to make a request for the case to move there.
- 24 As now, the defendant and claimant would be sent an Allocation Questionnaire informing them of the suggested court at which the case will be heard. Under the proposal this would now also include information on waiting times in the suggested court and other nearby courts, ensuring that the HMCTS decision-making process is transparent. The Allocation Questionnaire would still ask both parties whether they have any reason why the claim needs to be heard at a court other than the one proposed. Court users would then be able to state their preferred choice of court in the Allocation Questionnaires, which they would now be able to do based on better information. The proposal does not involve increasing court user administrative burdens, for example by asking court users for additional information compared to the current process.
- 25 If both parties disagree with the court initially suggested by HMCTS and agree on an alternative court, the case would be transferred to the court preferred by both parties. If there is disagreement between the two parties, the current procedure would continue to apply which, in most cases, gives preference to the defendant's local court. If either party disagrees with the resulting allocation, they would continue to have the option of making an application for a re-transfer to their preferred court, which would attract a fee of £40. The application would then be considered by a judge who will apply discretion in making the final decision. In doing so, the judge most likely base the decision on the preferences of court users, which is consistent with the current process.
- 26 The incentive for HMCTS is to allocate the case to the court all parties will be happy with in the first instance, as this avoids any future administrative costs associated with requests for transfer at the allocation stage, or post-allocation. The proposal is not expected to result in cases being initially allocated to courts that court users are unhappy with, and indeed in future there will be increased transparency over how the initial decision was made. Court users will maintain the same level of control over where their case is heard.

- 27 Separately, the objective of the proposal to remove the need for the Lord Chancellor's concurrence to High Court Judges sitting in the County Court is to provide greater flexibility in judicial allocation by streamlining the judicial allocation process. This may reduce County Court waiting times.

### Economic rationale

- 28 The conventional economic approach to government intervention to resolve a problem is based on efficiency or equity arguments. The Government may consider intervening if there are strong enough failures in the way markets operate (e.g. monopolies overcharging consumers) or if there are strong enough failures in existing government interventions (e.g. waste generated by misdirected rules). In both cases the proposed new intervention itself should avoid creating a further set of disproportionate costs and distortions. The Government may also intervene for equity (fairness) and re-distributional reasons (e.g. to reallocate goods and services to the more needy groups in society).
- 29 Intervention in this case is justified on efficiency grounds. The single County Court proposal aims to deliver more efficient case allocation by removing current barriers to initial case allocation, which should improve HMCTS resource utilisation. There would also be efficiency benefits associated with reducing information failures given court users will be provided with better information relating to court waiting times. The proposal may also deliver efficiency savings in the HMCTS Business Centres. Removing the requirement for Lord Chancellor consent in order for High Court judges to sit in the County Court should further improve HMCTS efficiency by removing an administrative element of the judicial allocation process. The proposals may also improve equity as waiting times across the County Court estate would on balance be expected to become more equal. Shorter waiting times should provide economic benefits for court users.
- 30 In some cases, there may be a resulting increase in resource costs for users and legal services providers e.g. from travelling further to court. The net impact on economic welfare is expected to be positive in such cases, given users would have chosen to incur these additional costs, presumably as the benefits to them of reduced waiting times would more than offset these extra costs. Legal services providers would be assumed to pass any additional costs (or benefits) on to their clients, who should also take this into account when making court location decisions.
- 31 The proposals may result in some additional resource required to provide judicial discretion in cases where claimants and defendants do not agree on the court where the case should be heard. There could be more disagreement in future given more information will be available to court users, which may result in increased levels of choice being exercised. However, this is uncertain, as based on better information there could be less disagreement in future. Any additional costs associated with more disagreement are assumed not to be sufficient to offset the gains outlined above, and on that basis the proposals are expected to generate efficiency and equity benefits overall.
- 32 In general the proposals aim to ensure that court allocation outcomes are better overall for court users, who might be businesses, also bearing in mind that court users cover the cost of using the court via the court fees they pay. This should generate increased overall efficiency. It is not the intention that for example cases might be allocated differently in future to reduce County Court operating costs (which in any case are covered by court fees) at the expense of overall increased net costs for court users. All affected parties are expected to gain as a result of the proposal.

### Affected stakeholder groups, organisations and sectors

- 33 The following individuals/sectors are likely to be affected by the proposals:
- *County Court users*: would be affected by the measures through better access to information, and possibly reduced waiting times. Court users include individuals and businesses.
  - *Legal service providers*: Lawyers representing County Court users may also be affected through increased travel costs and reduced waiting times, although these could also fall. It is expected that legal service providers would pass on any change in costs to clients (court users).
  - *HMCTS*: Would be affected as the proposals seek to amend HMCTS processes.



- *Judiciary*: Would be affected as the proposals seek to amend the judicial allocation process.
- *Legal Services Commission*: The proposals may have some legal aid implications given the proposals may result in changes to legal costs, and some County Court users may be legally aided.

## 2. Costs and benefits

- 34 This Impact Assessment identifies impacts on individuals, groups and businesses in the UK, with the aim of understanding what the overall impact to society might be from implementing these options. The costs and benefits of each option are compared to the do nothing option. Impact Assessments place a strong emphasis on valuing the costs and benefits in monetary terms (including estimating the value of goods and services that are not traded). However there are important aspects that cannot sensibly be monetised. These might include how the proposal impacts differently on particular groups of society or changes in equity and fairness, either positive or negative.
- 35 It has not been possible to monetise the aggregate costs and benefits relating to the proposals covered in this Impact Assessment. In order to provide a robust assessment, the following information would be required:
- The pattern and volume of cases arising across the County Court and High Court estate i.e. the demand for court and judicial resources, disaggregated to a local level, plus future court efficiency and resource utilisation. These factors will drive baseline waiting times across the court estate, plus both the demand for High Court judges to be moved to the County Court, and the availability of High Court judges for reallocation. It is not possible to accurately predict the volume or pattern of demand for court and judicial resources, although current demands can provide useful background information (and are referred to where appropriate).
  - The willingness of court users to trade off reduced waiting times for greater travel distance and associated costs including any increased legal costs, plus the ability of HMCTS to accurately predict where court users wish their case to be allocated in future. This will drive the volume of cases that we might expect to be allocated to different courts as a result of the proposal, plus the resources required to reallocate cases where court users do not agree on location. Court user preferences over travel times and associated costs and waiting times are unknown, both in aggregate and at an individual level. It is not considered proportionate to find out this information through surveys or other research methods, particularly given we expect the proposal to benefit court users, and at worst leave them no worse off. The consultation responses received also indicate that court users are highly supportive of the proposal.
  - The location of court users (and their legal representatives) in relation to courts. This will drive the magnitude of costs associated with increased travel. The location of future court users and their representatives in relation to courts is uncertain, although detail on the average distance between courts is provided where appropriate.
- 36 Overall, a robust quantitative assessment would require estimates of each item of information outlined above including an assessment of the behavioural response of court users. This would relate to whether court users are more likely to exercise choice (and hence request more case transfers) based on the greater information provided, and on whether court users in aggregate agree more with the court suggested by HMCTS in the first instance (and hence request fewer case transfers). This information is unavailable.
- 37 We do not believe that developing indicative scenarios based on a series of assumptions would provide any meaningful additional information that would be helpful in identifying the identified impacts of the proposals, particularly given these proposals are expected to generate net benefits for all court users, and are strongly supported by court users, HMCTS and the judiciary. Therefore, a qualitative assessment of the expected impacts is provided, with the relevant risks and assumptions clearly set out.

## **Option 0: Base case (do nothing)**

### **Description**

- 38 Under the do-nothing option, the current County Court structure would be left unchanged. The requirement for the Lord Chief Justice to seek the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor each time a High Court Judge is required to sit in the County Court would also remain in place.
- 39 Cases would continue to be initially allocated by HMCTS to a court with jurisdiction over the specific geographical location in which the claimant or defendant lives, depending on the nature of the case. This means that cases may be allocated to a County Court simply because that court has the relevant geographical jurisdiction, even though it may have longer waiting times than other nearby courts.
- 40 For example, in 2009 fast and multi-track claims at Epsom County Court in Surrey took an average of 466 days to progress from issue to trial, whereas in the same year Croydon County Court (also in Surrey) took an average of 362 days to progress to trial. Over the same period, Bromley County Court in Kent took an average of 345 days to progress a case to trial while Ashford County Court also in Kent took an average of 256 days.
- 41 Although the current rules provide for judicial discretion over where a case should be dealt with, this discretion requires court users to request and justify a move to an alternative court. Court users are not provided with information relating to waiting times in adjacent courts, meaning they may be unable to specify a preference, or to fully justify a request.
- 42 Because the do nothing option is compared against itself its costs and benefits are necessarily zero, as is its Net Present Value (NPV).

## **Option 1 - Establish a single County Court for England and Wales**

### **Description**

- 43 Under this option, a single County Court jurisdiction would be established. There would be no geographical jurisdictional boundaries: there would be only one County Court jurisdiction over the whole of England and Wales.
- 44 HMCTS would no longer be restricted to initially allocating cases to specific County Courts, and would initially be able to allocate cases to alternative courts if it would be quicker to deal with them there (and it is considered likely that court users would prefer being allocated to that court). Court users would be provided with information at the case allocation stage relating to waiting times at nearby courts, and would be better able to judge where they wish their case to be heard. If cases are allocated to a court that is not a preferred choice, as now court users would have the opportunity to specify a different preference and if necessary apply for a transfer after the case allocation stage. Such applications would be considered by a judge who will make the final decision on where the case should be tried, but the default position when allocating a case would remain that court user preferences take precedent over other factors.
- 45 It is not the case that all court users would be required to provide more information about their preferred choice of court prior to the initial court allocation decision by HMCTS. Instead court users would provide the same amount of initial information as they do now. The difference is that HMCTS would be less restricted in terms of how, on the basis of all information they hold, they make an initial court allocation. This should lead to an improved initial allocation.
- 46 Court users would also be provided with more information (at no cost) about court waiting times. Beforehand they might have been above to secure this information by making various inquiries, with cost implications. As a result of reducing the cost to users of obtaining court waiting time information, it is possible that more court users might review their initial court allocation. Currently many court users might not do so if the information required to enable this is not readily available. It is unclear whether the volume of subsequent case transfer requests might increase, for the reasons outlined above, i.e. compared to now court users might be happier with their initial court allocation, but conversely in future more court users might choose to review their allocation and request a transfer in light of this.

- 47 In 2010 approximately two million civil and family cases were issued in the County Court. Of these, around 450,000 were defended or contested and were subject to the current allocation and transfer procedures.

## Costs

- 48 There may be a one off adjustment costs for all affected parties associated with familiarisation with the new County Court structures and processes. These costs are not expected to be significant.

## HMCTS

- 49 There are likely to be some one-off costs for HMCTS associated with changing the case allocation and transfer process, given some cases are currently allocated to specific courts based on their geographical jurisdiction only. The cost will involve changing the current allocation and transfer rules and providing training for court staff. There may also be some cost relating to providing court users with waiting time information at nearby courts at the case allocation stage. These ongoing costs are not expected to be significant. The operational costs to HMCTS of making the initial allocation are not expected to differ. HMCTS will be able to allocate a case within a wider geographical area than they do now, taking the variation in waiting times and distances into account. However any additional considerations by HMCTS are not expected to make a significant material difference to HMCTS initial case allocation costs per case.
- 50 As now, County Court users will be able to specify preferences at the case allocation stage and if necessary make applications to request case transfers to alternative County Court. While existing transfer processes will continue to apply, with the HMCTS operational costs per transfer remaining the same, there may be additional total costs for HMCTS associated with case allocation if better informed court users more fully express their preferences in the future i.e. if there is an increase in the volume of transfer requests.
- 51 However, it is also possible that providing better information and being able to more flexibly allocate cases could lead to fewer requests for transfer at the allocation stage and thereafter. This would occur if HMCTS are better able to allocate cases to courts that court users wish their case to be heard at, and by making case allocation decisions more transparent. In aggregate, the impact of the proposal on allocation costs is unclear in direction and magnitude.
- 52 In theory, hearing cases locally may provide benefits if local judges are better placed to use local knowledge. It has been assumed that case outcomes would not be affected by this proposal and this possibility is considered a risk, not an expected cost.
- 53 There would be no plans to change the signs in each County Court if a single County Court jurisdiction was established. Therefore, there would be no HMCTS costs in relation to signage. There may be very minor costs associated with introducing and using a new single County Court seal.
- 54 Overall the volume of cases and court fees are not expected to change as a result of the proposal. This is consistent with making no assumption about whether HMCTS allocation costs would rise or fall in aggregate, as explained above. In general fees are set to cover costs.

## County Court users

- 55 County Court users may be businesses or individuals. We do not collect information on whether litigants are a business or not. The names of litigants are recorded but it is not clear if they are involved in the case in a personal or business capacity. Gathering this information would require individual inspection of the paper court files for each case, which is not considered proportionate. The impacts are therefore presented for court users as a whole.
- 56 Court users may face additional travel and time costs in the event that their case is allocated to a different court as a result of the proposal, and they are content with this decision. These costs would be determined by the distance of court users from the court the case would currently be heard at, and the court it would now be heard at under the proposal. The average distance between courts is 20 and 40 miles in non-metropolitan areas and two to seven miles in London.

These average distances are likely to increase slightly in future following planned court closures. As explained above, it would not be considered proportionate to attempt to quantify the likely cost of increased travel time, as we cannot predict how many cases will be heard at different courts following the proposal, the location of those courts, or where litigants will be travelling from. The proposal is expected to generate net benefits for court users overall, and court users were highly supportive of the proposal at consultation.

- 57 There may be a distributional impact on court users as those who are currently allocated to courts with relatively shorter waiting lists may experience an increase in waiting times if cases from other courts are transferred to their local court. However, in aggregate we expect average waiting times to fall, which will benefit court users overall.
- 58 If using privately funded legal representation, users may also face any additional legal costs if their legal representatives faced increased travel costs and passed these on in the form of higher legal costs. This might occur if legal representatives do not share the same geographical location as their clients. However, it is also possible that travel costs for their legal representatives may fall. Overall it is unclear whether such costs would increase or fall in aggregate, given the uncertainties outlined above.
- 59 As with the current processes, if users were unhappy with the initially suggested County Court, they could specify a preference at the allocation stage and if necessary, subsequently apply for a transfer under existing rules. This latter transfer request involves a £40 fee. As explained above, it is possible that the volume of transfer requests once the case has proceeded past the initial allocation stage could increase or fall, based on the assumptions adopted. In aggregate, we have assumed no change in the aggregate volume of transfer requests.
- 60 Even if the volume of transfer requests remains the same, it is possible that court users might spend more time in future in reviewing their initial court allocation. Previously some court users might have accepted their initial court allocation without considering or considering alternatives, for example because of the cost of obtaining the information needed to form a view on this. In future this information will be provided at no cost, which is a benefit to court users, and this might lead to court users assessing the information and reviewing their court allocation, when beforehand they would not have done so.

### *Legal service providers*

- 61 Legal service providers may face increased travel costs if cases move courts as a result of the proposal, although travel costs could also be lower if travel distances for legal service providers fall in aggregate. The costs would be determined by the distance of legal service providers from the court chosen under the current and proposed processes, in the instances where these differ. It is assumed that such costs would be passed on to clients, who should take these additional costs into account when they choose the court at which they wish their case to be heard. It is also assumed that the proposal would have no impact on the total number of cases pursued in aggregate. Overall, we have estimated no net cost for legal service providers.

### *Legal Services Commission*

- 62 There may be additional legal aid costs (i.e. costs for legal services providers whose costs are covered by the legal aid fund) if cases involving legally aided court users are transferred to more distant courts as a result of the proposal, and the court users are content. These costs would result from increased travel costs incurred by their legal representatives, which would be passed on in legal costs. However, these costs may in fact be lower if legal service providers are on average located closer to courts under the proposal. We have therefore estimated no net cost to the Legal Services Commission in aggregate.

## **Benefits**

### *HMCTS*

- 63 Establishing a single County Court jurisdiction would enable a single County Court seal to be used in HMCTS Business Centres, which should generate minor efficiency benefits. For example, it may take approximately one minute for a member of staff at the Business Centre to find the correct

County Court seal (from more than 200 seals). Business Centres currently process approximately 650,000 claims per year. The proposal may therefore result in some minor efficiency savings, although these are not expected to be significant and have been scored as negligible.

- 64 In addition, having a single County Court would make it easier to move more processes to the Business Centres in future. Early estimates for the next phase of the MoJ Business Centres programme suggest possible net savings of around £2-5 million per year from 2014/15 onwards. These savings may be at risk if the single County Court is not introduced. However, as these are not direct impacts, and will be subject to separate future appraisal, this figure is not included as a monetised benefit associated with a single County Court in the summary sheets.
- 65 As explained in detail in the cost section, overall HMCTS costs are not expected to change significantly, and the proposal is not expected to have an impact on case volumes or court fees. In general fees are set to cover costs.

### *County Court users*

- 66 County Court users would benefit from having access to better information, allowing them to express a more informed choice in relation to where their case is heard. Users may place a value on receiving this information in itself. In addition some users might previously have spent resources in obtaining this information in order to consider whether to make a transfer request. These users will avoid incurring these costs in future, to their benefit. The proposal may also reduce the need to request a move to a different court at allocation stage and post-allocation, given the proposal will enable increased HMCTS flexibility in allocation in the first instance, which may result in better initial allocation from the perspective of court users.
- 67 Court users overall may benefit from shorter waiting times: any reduction would depend on the waiting times of the relevant courts on a case by case basis. The proposed process should ensure that cases only move as a result of the proposal when court users agree, which presumably will only occur when a move is beneficial for court users. When there is disagreement between court users, the existing processes will continue to apply, and on average we would expect the case to be allocated to the court it would be under the current system. Overall, the proposal does not change the degree of control court users have over the location of where their case is heard.
- 68 In purely illustrative terms, if the number of defended cases remains at 450,000 and average waiting times fell by two days per case, this would equate to a reduction in aggregate waiting times of approximately 130,000 weeks. County Court users would attach a value to this. For example, longer waiting times may be associated with increased legal costs if waiting times result in more work required by legal service providers, or other costs associated with cash flows or with unsettled debts.

### *Legal service providers*

- 69 If waiting times fall overall, legal service providers may benefit from reduced waiting times as a result of the proposal. As explained above, the proposal is expected to have a neutral impact on legal service providers overall.

### *Equity (fairness)*

- 70 Quicker case resolution might be associated with increased equity, as might lower variation in waiting times across the County Court estate.

### *Wider social and economic benefits*

- 71 The proposals would be associated with increased resource efficiency, given the assumptions adopted. They would also seek to reduce existing information failure, which should provide further efficiency benefits.

## Risks and assumptions

- 72 It is not clear how many cases would be heard at different courts as a result of the proposal, or how many transfer applications would be made at case allocation or post allocation. It is noted that HMCTS has an incentive to allocate cases in the first instance to courts that users will be happy with.
- 73 The identified impacts are largely generated by cases moving courts. The magnitude of these impacts will be driven by the distance of users and their legal service providers to the relevant courts, and by the difference in waiting times in these courts, both of which are unknown. This is considered in more detail above.
- 74 It is assumed that the proposal would have no impact on the total volume of cases being pursued through the County Court, nor on the ability or willingness of court users to gain legal representation.
- 75 It is assumed that the proposal would have no impact on case outcomes, or the perceived justice of case outcomes. In particular, it is assumed that the customer service provided by each County Court is equivalent, including in relation to facilities, and that waiting times are the key factor for court users when making a choice over which court they wish their case to be heard.
- 76 It is assumed that court fees would remain unchanged following the proposal, and that overall HMCTS costs would not change significantly. In particular, it is assumed that providing additional information to court users would not be associated with a significant increase in HMCTS costs. It is also assumed that the level of HMCTS and judicial court resources would remain unchanged following the implementation of the proposal. As set out above, the proposal may increase or reduce HMCTS case allocation costs, depending on the behavioural response of court users. In aggregate, court fees are set to cover costs, so in the long-run any impact on HMCTS costs would have an impact on court fees, assuming the level of HMCTS resource is fixed.

## **Option 2 - Abolish the need for the Lord Chancellor's concurrence to High Court Judges sitting in the County Court**

### Description

- 77 Under the current arrangements if a court has identified a need for judicial cover in the County Court, the Designated Civil Judge for that court will escalate the matter to the Presiding Judge, the Senior Presiding Judge and the Master of the Rolls. If it is then agreed that a High Court Judge is required to provide judicial cover, the Lord Chief Justice will be informed but cannot give approval until the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor is given.
- 78 Under the proposed arrangements, the requirement for the Lord Chief Justice to seek the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor when permitting High Court Judges to sit in the County Court would be abolished. Judicial allocation would be the responsibility of the Judiciary without involving the Lord Chancellor.
- 79 While the current arrangements involve administrative costs, they provide a safeguard (with associated accountability) that judicial resources are being deployed appropriately, including in relation to judicial costs and judicial experience. In future, the judiciary will put in place their own systems to provide equivalent safeguards.
- 80 The number of requests for the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor is currently very small. In 2010 only two requests for concurrence were sought, although the amount of reallocation may increase in future if requests do not need to be made to the Lord Chancellor. It currently takes around two weeks from the time the Lord Chief Justice's letter is received to the time the Lord Chancellor's concurrence is sent, and requests are rarely denied. If the request for concurrence were no longer required, a High Court Judge could be deployed more quickly to provide judicial cover when needed.

## Costs

### *HMCTS, County Court users*

- 81 There might be some cost to HMCTS and County Court users in relation to reduced accountability and reduced safeguards regarding the allocation of High Court judges to the County Court. These are not expected to be significant given equivalent safeguards are expected to be provided by the judiciary, and have therefore been scored as negligible. The cost of judges is equivalent in both courts.

### *The judiciary*

- 82 The judiciary might incur costs as a result of ensuring that their own processes provide equivalent safeguards that judges are being allocated appropriately. These are not expected to be any greater than the current costs to the judiciary associated with adhering to the Lord Chancellor's approval process, and have therefore been scored as negligible.

## Benefits

### *HMCTS*

- 83 Removing an administrative element of the judicial allocation process should generate efficiency benefits for HMCTS as the processes required to achieve Lord Chancellor concurrence would no longer need to be undertaken. Given the small volume of requests currently made and expected in future, it is expected that any benefits will be small and that the level of HMCTS and judicial court resources would remain unchanged following the implementation of the proposal.
- 84 It is possible that the new arrangements might lead to more High Court judges being used in the County Court if they are available to sit. This may help to reduce County Court waiting times and may enable HMCTS resources to be used more efficiently. There should be no risk that High Court waiting times will escalate as High Court Judge deployment will only occur if there is sufficient High Court Judge capacity. However, due to the small volume of requests currently made and expected in future, these benefits are not expected to be significant, and have been scored as negligible.

### *The judiciary*

- 85 The judiciary may benefit if the new process enables judges to be allocated more quickly and more flexibly whilst retaining current safeguards. Due to the small volume of requests currently made and expected in future, these benefits are not expected to be significant, and have been scored as negligible.

### *County Court users*

- 86 Waiting times for litigants and delays in proceedings may be reduced through quicker deployment of High Court Judges to undertake County Court hearings when necessary. This would benefit County Court users. However, given the expected small number of cases involved and expected in future, these impacts are not expected to be significant and have been scored as negligible.

### *Equity (fairness)*

- 87 If waiting times do fall in the County Court, quicker case resolution might be associated with increased equity.

### *Wider social and economic benefits*

- 88 The proposals would be associated with increased resource efficiency, given the assumptions adopted.

## Risks and assumptions

- 89 It is assumed that all impacts are likely to be minor in scale (negligible) as the volume of requests made to the Lord Chancellor is small, as are the costs of the concurrence procedure. The Lord

Chancellor currently approves the vast majority of requests made. It is assumed that any future increase in judicial reallocation as a result of the proposal would not be great enough to lead to the identified impacts being non-negligible.

- 90 It is assumed that the judiciary would provide equivalent safeguards as now that judges are being allocated appropriately. However, the absence of Lord Chancellor concurrence might lead to reduced high level accountability in relation to the allocation of judges.
- 91 It is assumed that the proposal would have no impact on the volume of cases being pursued through the County Court or High Court, nor on the ability or willingness of court users to gain legal representation.
- 92 It is assumed that the proposal would have no impact on case outcomes, or the perceived justice of case outcomes, or on the perceived or actual quality and depth of decision-making. It is assumed that there would be no impact on the duration of court hearings for the cases that in future may be heard by a High Court judge rather than a County Court judge. Court user satisfaction in such cases is also assumed to be unaffected.
- 93 It is assumed that the level of HMCTS and judicial court resources would remain unchanged following the implementation of the proposal. The expected efficiency savings are not expected to be significant, given the volume of requests currently made and expected in future.

### **Net Impact of Options 1 and 2 combined**

- 94 Options 1 and 2 were considered separately in the consultation stage of policy development. Following consultation the government has decided to implement both options. The net impact of implementing these options together will equal the sum of the net impacts of each proposal. In summary, both proposals are intended to increase HMCTS process efficiency and consequently to reduce waiting times at the County Court. It is not been possible to quantify all of the identified impacts for the reasons explained in detail in the appraisal of the single County Court proposal.
- 95 However, based on the analysis set out, we expect the proposals to result in a net benefit for all affected parties, as the proposals should result in more efficient HMCTS processes, and provide better information to allow more informed choices to be made by court users. Consultation responses suggest that all affected parties are strongly supportive of the proposals.

### **One in One Out Assessment**

- 96 The One-in, One-out (OIOO) rule means that no new primary or secondary UK legislation which imposes costs on business or civil society organisations can be brought in without the identification of existing regulations with an equivalent value that can be removed.
- 97 The proposals contained in this Impact Assessment relate to court rules and the way in which the courts allocate work. The proposals are likely to impact court users (who may be businesses) and legal firms (indirectly). We cannot quantify the impact on businesses in total because we do not collect information on whether litigants are a business or not. The names of litigants are recorded but it is not clear if they involved in the case in a personal or business capacity. Gathering this information would require individual inspection of the paper court files for each case, which is not considered proportionate. Impacts are therefore presented for court users as a whole. Any impacts on legal service providers are expected to be neutral, given any changes to costs should be passed on to court users through equivalent changes to legal fees.
- 98 While some court users may face additional travel and legal costs associated with their case being heard at a more distant court as a result of the proposal, there would be associated offsetting benefits from reduced waiting times. As court users will be provided the information with which to make an informed choice over court location, and will still maintain the same degree of control over where a case is heard, we expect the impact on court users, including businesses, to be positive overall.
- 99 As set out above, there are a range of uncertainties meaning it has not been possible to quantify the impacts of the proposals. For this reason, although we would expect the proposals to generate



positive net benefits for businesses, on a conservative basis we have scored a zero net cost to business.

### **3. Enforcement and Implementation**

100 HMCTS and the Judiciary will be responsible for implementing and enforcing these proposals, which is planned to take effect from April 2014.

### **4. Specific Impact Tests**

#### *Statutory Equality Duties*

101 A draft Equality Impact Assessment is attached. It identifies some potential impacts on people with a disability.

#### *Competition assessment*

102 These proposals are not expected to have a significant impact on competition.

#### *Small Firms Impact Test*

103 Some court users are likely to be small businesses and they may face increased travel and legal costs if their case is heard at a more distant court. However, while some court users may face additional travel and legal costs, there would be associated offsetting benefits from reduced waiting times. As court users will be provided the information with which to make an informed choice over court location, and will still maintain the same degree of control over where a case is heard, we would expect the impact on court users to be positive overall.

104 These proposals would also impact on legal service providers which may be small businesses. Lawyers may face increased travel costs when cases are transferred to alternative courts, although equally these could be lower. These costs would be determined by the distance between the providers and the relevant courts. However, it is assumed that any costs will be passed on to clients, meaning there is likely to be no net impact on legal services providers, given it is assumed that the overall volume of cases will be unchanged as a result of the proposal.

#### *Carbon Assessment*

105 Depending on where a case is allocated or transferred, they may reduce or increase travelling distances for court users and legal service providers in total, thereby reducing or increasing carbon emissions.

#### *Wider Environmental Impacts*

106 As above, the possible change in travelling requirements may have an impact on noise pollution, air quality and other associated environmental factors.

#### *Health Impact Assessment*

107 These proposals are not expected to have a significant impact on lifestyle or health and social care services. Reduced case waiting times might have a positive impact on some health matters, e.g. anxiety.

#### *Human rights*

108 These proposals are compliant with the Human Rights Act (1998).

#### *Justice Impact Test*

109 The impacts on the justice system are contained in the main body of this Impact Assessment.

### *Rural proofing*

110 These proposals may affect litigants based in rural areas if they have to attend a non-local court. However it is considered unlikely that this will happen as HMCTS will endeavour to allocate cases to local courts in the first instance, and court users will still maintain the same level of control over where their case is heard as at present.

### *Sustainable Development*

111 The proposals are not expected to have a significant impact on sustainable development.

## **Annex 1: List of County Court (as at 1 October 2011)**

Bath Magistrates' & County Court  
Bristol County Court  
Taunton Combined Court  
Worle Magistrates' & County Court  
Yeovil County Court  
Bedford County Court  
Luton County Court  
Cambridge Civil Justice Centre  
Peterborough Combined Court  
Chester Civil Justice Centre  
Crewe Magistrates' And County Court  
Macclesfield County Court  
Warrington Combined Court  
Hartlepool Magistrates' And County Court  
Teesside Combined Court  
Barrow-In-Furness Crown, Magistrates' And County Court  
Carlisle Combined Court  
Buxton Magistrates' And County Court  
Chesterfield County Court  
Derby Combined Court  
Barnstaple Crown, Magistrates' and County Court  
Bodmin Magistrates' & County Court  
Exeter Combined Court Centre  
Plymouth Combined Court  
Torquay and Newton Abbott County Court  
Truro Combined Court  
Bournemouth Combined Court  
Weymouth & Dorchester Combined Court (Weymouth)  
Darlington County Court  
Durham Civil & Family Court  
Aberystwyth County Court  
Brecon Law Courts  
Carmarthen County Court  
Haverfordwest Crown, Magistrates' And County Court  
Llanelli Magistrates' And County Court  
Welshpool Crown, Magistrates' And County Court  
Basildon Combined Court  
Chelmsford County & Family Court  
Colchester County Court  
Southend County Court  
Gloucester Combined Court  
Tameside Magistrates' And County Court  
Bolton Combined Court  
Bury Magistrates' And County Court  
Leigh County Court (closed)  
Manchester Civil Justice Centre  
Oldham County Court  
Stockport County Court  
Trafford Magistrates' Court And Altrincham County Court  
Wigan And Leigh Magistrates' Court  
Blackwood Civil & Family Magistrates' Court  
Newport County Court  
Aldershot & Farnham County Court  
Basingstoke County Court  
Newport (low) Law Courts  
Portsmouth Combined Court

Southampton Combined Court  
Winchester Combined Court  
Hertford County Court  
St Albans Crown Court  
Watford County Court  
Great Grimsby Combined Court  
Kingston Upon Hull Combined Court  
Scunthorpe Magistrates' And County Court  
Canterbury Combined Court  
Medway County Court  
Dartford County Court  
Maidstone Combined Court  
Margate Magistrates' And Thanet County Court  
Tunbridge Wells County Court  
Accrington County Court  
Blackburn County Court  
Blackpool County Court  
Burnley Combined Court  
Lancaster County Court  
Preston Combined Court  
Leicester County Court  
Lincoln County Court  
Barnet Civil & Family Court  
Bow County Court  
Brentford County Court  
Bromley County Court  
Mayors & City of London County Court  
Central London Trial Centre  
Croydon Combined Court  
Edmonton County Court  
Clerkenwell & Shoreditch County Court  
West London Magistrates' And County Court  
Ilford County Court  
Kingston upon Thames County Court  
Lambeth County Court  
Romford County Court  
Uxbridge County Court  
Wandsworth County Court  
Willesden County Court  
Woolwich County Court  
Birkenhead County Court  
Liverpool Civil Justice Centre  
St Helens County Court  
Kings Lynn County Court  
Norwich Combined Court  
Caernarfon County Court  
Llandudno Magistrates' & Conwy and Colwyn County  
Court  
Llangefni County Court  
Mold Magistrates' Court  
Rhyl County Court  
Wrexham County Court  
Harrogate County Court  
Scarborough County Court  
Skipton Magistrates' And County Court  
York County Court  
Kettering County Court  
Northampton Combined Court  
Gateshead Magistrates' & County Court  
Morpeth County Court

Newcastle Upon Tyne Combined Court  
North Shields County Court  
South Tyneside Magistrates' And South Shields  
County Court  
Sunderland County Court  
Mansfield County Court  
Nottingham Crown and County Court  
Bridgend Magistrates' & County Court  
Cardiff Civil Justice Centre  
Merthyr Tydfil Combined Court  
Neath & Port Talbot County Court  
Pontypridd County Court  
Swansea Civil Justice Centre  
Doncaster County Court  
Rotherham Magistrates' And County Court  
Sheffield Combined Court  
Burton-Upon-Trent County Court  
Stafford Combined Court  
Stoke Combined Court  
Bury St Edmunds County Court  
Ipswich County Court  
Guildford Magistrates' And County Court  
Redhill Magistrates' And Reigate County Court  
Staines Magistrates' And County Court  
Brighton County Court  
Chichester Combined Court  
Eastbourne Magistrates' And County Court  
Hastings Magistrates' And County Court  
Horsham Magistrates' And County Court  
Lewes Combined Court  
Worthing Magistrates' And County Court  
Aylesbury Magistrates' Court  
Banbury Magistrates' And County Court  
High Wycombe Magistrates' And County Court  
Milton Keynes and County Magistrates' Court  
Oxford Combined Court Centre  
Reading County Court  
Slough Magistrates' And County Court  
North Warwickshire Justice Centre (Nuneaton)  
Warwick Combined Court  
Hereford County Court  
Telford County Court  
Worcester Combined Court  
Birmingham Civil Justice Centre  
Coventry Combined Court  
West Midlands Court Centre (Dudley County)  
Walsall County Court  
Wolverhampton Combined Court  
Bradford Combined Court  
Dewsbury County Court  
Halifax County Court  
Huddersfield County Court  
Keighley County Court  
Leeds Combined Court  
Pontefract County Court  
Wakefield County Court  
Salisbury Law Courts  
Swindon Combined Court  
Trowbridge County Court