



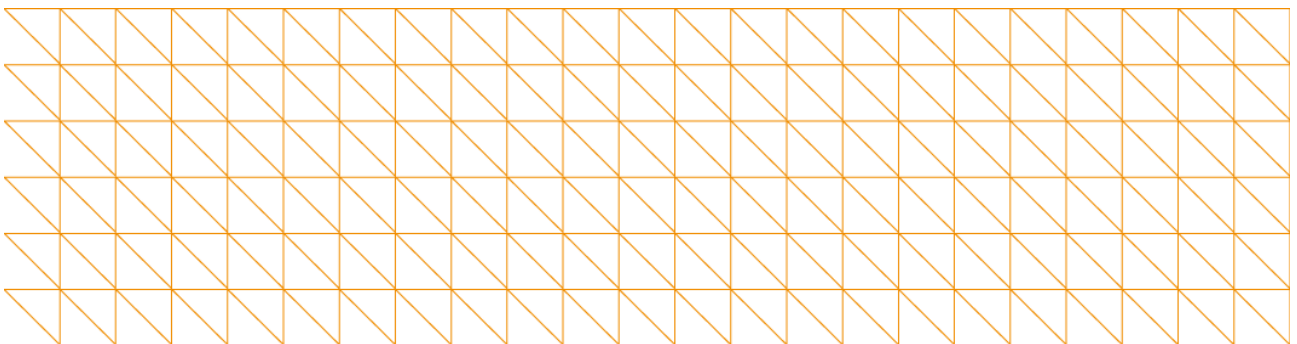
Ministry
of Justice



HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

Response to the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in the North East region

This response is published on 11 February 2016





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Response to consultation carried out by HM Courts & Tribunals Service, part of the Ministry of Justice. This information is also available at www.gov.uk/moj

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Introduction and contact details

This document is the response to the consultation paper, *'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the North East region'*.

It will cover:

- the background to the consultation
- a summary of the responses to the consultation
- detailed points in reply
- next steps

Further copies of this report and the consultation paper can be obtained by contacting **HMCTS Consultation** at the address below:

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Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact HM Courts & Tribunals Service at the above address.

Foreword

On the 16 July 2015 the national consultation on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales was published. This included proposals to close eight courts and tribunals in the North East and information on plans to integrate a further eight courts and tribunals in the region.

Working with the judiciary, we want to reform our services so that they better meet the needs of the public in the modern age. The consultation put forward proposals to make changes to our estate where buildings are no longer able to provide a modern service due to poor facilities, where usage is low and where sites no longer provide value for money.

A total of 176 consultation responses and three petitions including over 1100 signatures, were received for the North East region. As the Delivery Director responsible for managing the operations of HM Courts & Tribunals Service in the North East region I am very grateful to everyone for taking the time to provide their views on our proposals and help us to reach the best solutions. It is clear from the responses that our courts and tribunals continue to be valued by society and that it is important to maintain effective access to justice.

The Lord Chancellor has agreed to close eight courts in the North East region. Seven sites will close as proposed in the consultation, with a further one taking place but with changes to the original proposal. Further details are included on a court-by-court basis in the summary of responses

The decision to close a court will mean that in some cases court users will need to travel further to attend court. We have modified some of our plans using the local knowledge provided in responses to the consultation, to reduce the travel time impact to court users. We will continue to investigate and develop alternative ways for users to access our services to improve access to justice.

Staff and judiciary who work hard to deliver our justice system will obviously be affected by these changes. I am committed to working closely with the judiciary on the implementation of these changes. I am also committed to supporting our staff through these changes and the transition to new arrangements will take place in a fair and transparent manner in consultation with the Departmental Trade Union.

Attached with this document is an indicative timetable for implementation. Please note this timetable is subject to change as the programme progresses.

Mark Swales

**Delivery Director
HM Courts & Tribunals Service North East**

Background

The consultation paper 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the North East region' was published on 16 July 2015. It invited comments from anyone with an interest in local justice to ensure that courts and tribunals can meet the demand of local communities; that communities continue to have access to court and tribunal buildings where they need to attend or through alternative methods; and that cases are heard in buildings with suitable facilities.

This consultation proposed the closure of the following courts¹:

- Consett Magistrates' Court
- Halifax County Court and Family Court
- Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' Court and Family Court
- Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court
- Morpeth County Court
- Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court
- Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court
- Wakefield Magistrates' Court

Integration of services and jurisdictions

To provide users with an overview of all proposed change to the estate, the consultation also included information on where HM Courts & Tribunals Service plan to integrate courts within the same town or city. Local stakeholders will be notified of these changes when they take place.

An integration is when HM Courts & Tribunals Service moves work to allow jurisdictions to operate from fewer locations in a local area. This allows the closure of a building or buildings while retaining local jurisdictions, with a limited impact on service provision. Integrations are managed by HM Courts & Tribunals Service operational leads as part of the normal running of the business.

Doncaster County Court to be integrated within Doncaster Magistrates' Court

The exit of Doncaster County Court as an integration is already in progress and targeted for the end of March 2016.

Doncaster Tribunal (Portland Place) to be integrated within Doncaster Crown Court.

The exit of Doncaster Tribunal as an integration is already in progress and targeted for the end of March 2016.

Durham Elvet House Tribunal to be integrated within other locations within the County Durham estate, including Durham County and Family Court

Although we are not due to exit Durham Elvet House Tribunal until the latter half of 2016 we have already started discussions and planning with the staff and judiciary.

East Parade Sheffield Tribunal to be integrated within Sheffield Combined Court

The proposals for exiting East Parade Sheffield have been agreed with the relevant judiciary and courts. The aim is to progress in early 2016 subject to funding being available.

Harrogate County Court

Integration within Harrogate Magistrates' Court completed in December 2015.

Middlesbrough Tribunal Hearing Centre to be integrated within Teesside Magistrates' Court

Although we are not due to exit Middlesbrough Tribunal (Centre North East) until the early part of 2017, we have already started discussions and planning with the staff and judiciary.

Quayside House Newcastle Tribunal integrated within North Shields (Kings Court) Tribunal.

Completed in August 2015.

Wilberforce Court (Hull Employment Tribunal Centre) to be integrated within Hull and Holderness Magistrates' Court and Kingston Upon Hull Combined Court

The proposal is to exit Wilberforce Court early to mid 2016 however this is subject to funding and we will aim to exit well in advance of the lease end in 2017.

The consultation closed on 8 October 2015 and this report summarises the responses, including how the consultation process influenced the final shape/further development of the policy/proposal consulted upon.

The Impact Assessment accompanying the consultation was updated to take account of evidence provided by stakeholders during the consultation period. The updated Impact Assessment is attached.

¹Reference in this document to magistrates' courts, county courts, crown courts and combined courts refers to buildings (a singular structure providing the physical hearing rooms for criminal, civil, family and tribunal cases) which house that activity in a particular location. Strictly, legislation provides that there is a single crown court, county court and family court.

Summary of responses on the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the North East region

The majority of consultees responded to proposals on specific courts rather than the whole regional consultation document.

A total of 176 individual responses to the North East Region consultation paper were received. Of these:

- 39 were from members of the public
- 35 were from magistrates
- 30 were from professional users
- 21 were from other public sector bodies
- 20 were from members of the judiciary
- 13 were from criminal justice partners
- 10 were from members of staff
- seven were from Members of Parliament
- one was from a union or staff group

Of the responses received 23 related to the region as a whole. Of these responses 12 were opposed, four were supportive and seven were neutral in their response to the proposals.

A stakeholder list of all respondents is at **Annex A**.

Some respondents commented on more than one proposal and so their views have been considered for each site mentioned in their response.

Eight responses were received from Tribunal Judiciary and each raised concerns with either:

1. capacity at receiving sites
2. tribunal users being intimidated by the physical formality of attending a court building.

In response to point one, a full feasibility study has been undertaken in connection with all closing and integrating sites. There have been no concerns raised with regard to capacity at the receiving sites and workload can be incorporated into current schedules.

Secondly, all work that is due to take place at the receiving sites will include the ability to seat tribunal users in separate waiting areas to court users. Areas for different court users

will reinforce the multi-jurisdictional use of the building and allow users to feel more comfortable with their surroundings.

In addition, we aim to use our estate more intelligently and flexibly to reduce running costs and to increase the multi-functional court space, allowing different court and tribunal jurisdictions to share locations.

To ensure that access to justice is maintained, even in more rural locations, we are committed to providing alternative ways for appellants to access our services, including (where appropriate) the use of other civic buildings.

County court utilisation

The county court utilisation figures provided in the site by site consultation proposals used sitting hour's workload data as a share of total court room capacity. HM Courts & Tribunals Service is aware that some county courts occasionally use chambers and informal rooms to hear county court work and this may not be recorded in the workload data for some of these courts. A number of responses highlighted that work heard in county court chambers should also be considered as part of the overall usage of the court, therefore supplementary data on judicial work held in chambers and informal rooms was considered before final decisions were made.

These points and the rest of the responses are considered in the remaining sections of the document for each court.

Operating costs

The operating costs included in this document have been updated from those published in July. They have been adjusted to reflect current prices.

Decision

After careful consideration, the Lord Chancellor has decided the following court will close, though with changes to the original proposals in the consultation. We have identified an alternative venue to receive some of the workload in order to reduce the impact of the closure on court users. Further details are included on a court-by-court basis in the responses to individual proposals;

- Consett Magistrates' Court

The following courts will close as proposed;

- Halifax County Court and Family Court
- Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' and Family Court
- Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court
- Morpeth County Court
- Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court
- Scunthorpe Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court
- Wakefield Magistrates' Court

Responses to individual proposals

Consett Magistrates' Court

The Lord Chancellor has decided that Consett Magistrates' Court should close.

A total of 16 responses were received relating to Consett Magistrates' Court. Of these:

- four were from magistrates
- three were from members of the public
- two were from criminal justice partners
- two were from members of the judiciary
- two were from other public sector bodies
- two were from professional court users
- one was from a union or staff group

Of these responses none were in favour of the proposals, five were neutral whilst 11 were opposed.

Access to justice

Consett Magistrates' Court is situated approximately 26 miles from Peterlee and 14 miles from Durham Civil and Family Justice Centre.

All responses made reference to access to justice issues.

“The greatest impact on travelling times is on those individuals from rural areas, e.g. Consett. It does not seem just that such individuals have to travel further and spend more because of where they live.” (Magistrate)

“What the proposals fail to recognise is that court users, whether at Consett (or indeed Durham) will not start their journeys from there. Consett Magistrates' Court serves the surrounding area.” (Professional user)

Users should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend hearings, and we know that, in an increasingly digital age, users will not always need to attend hearings in person in order to access the justice system. To ensure that access to justice is maintained, including in more rural areas, we are committed to providing alternative ways for users to access our services, including (where appropriate) the use of other civic buildings.

In exceptional cases, start times of hearings may be delayed to allow later attendance due to travel difficulties but this would be considered on a case by case basis.

Although increased journeys have the potential to impact on some people, we consider it unlikely that this will result in a particular or substantial disadvantage to the majority of court users given the limited number of occasions they will need to access courts and tribunals services. Some of the services traditionally accessed by face to face visits to court are being offered online, for example make a plea service. Some court hearings can also be conducted by phone or video link and court users are being offered local alternatives to court hearings, for example a witness has the option to give evidence via video link and from a local venue. All these measures are reducing the need to travel to court buildings to access services.

We are mindful of the infrequency with which people need to attend court and the small proportion of people who would use public transport to reach court. Any travel impacts as a result of closing a court or tribunal need to be considered alongside low utilisation, whether the building is fit for purpose and the need to provide a good service to court users.

Value for money

During the 2014-15 financial year, operating costs at Consett Magistrates' Court were approximately £176,000. Consett Magistrates' Court would require significant investment to bring it up to the required standard.

None of the responses raised issues around value for money.

The site is freehold and given the significant redevelopment and investment in the immediate locality, is likely to generate interest on the open market.

Operational efficiency

Consett Magistrates' Court is currently utilised for approximately 25% of its capacity.

A number of responses made reference to operational efficiency:

“If Consett Magistrates' Court is to close, careful consideration must be given to the practicalities of redistributing the workload, having due regard to the risks involved listing criminal cases at venues without cells and prisoner escort staff.”
(Professional user)

There will be no enabling work required to accommodate the transfer of work as there is sufficient capacity in the receiving sites to meet the current and anticipated demand in the County Durham local justice area.

Closure would enable the work to be moved within a single local justice area. It would also enable other courts to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer demand and workflow demands more effectively.

Careful consideration will be given to the listing of cases and the practicalities of redistributing the workload.

Alternative provision of service

“Can you inform us when and if the decision is taken to close Consett Magistrates’ Court the reason why our residents cannot attend Chester Le Street or Durham Courts?” (Professional user)

Chester-Le-Street is the administration centre for the north of the county. The building previously had courtrooms which have been decommissioned and there are no cells and therefore no hearings take place at this location. This building is not fit for purpose to re open as a court house and HM Courts & Tribunals Service are currently reviewing its future use.

Some non–custody work can transfer to Durham Civil and Family Justice Centre. There is also an acceptance that certain hearings may be more suited to either the Gateshead or Newcastle estate, again due consideration will be applied on a case by case basis to specific postcode locations.

“Attending a dedicated courtroom has a certain gravitas about which town or community hall would not. Indeed the attendees may have been at, say, a dance or bingo session the day before. Not the right environment. If such rural venues are required would it not be better to equip a mobile facility, such as a bus, to meet the requirements.” (Magistrate)

“To reduce the reliance on buildings with poor facilities, can I suggest that Magistrates should be consulted on what facilities they require to maximise their efficiency. For example adequate retiring rooms, improved pre-case information, improved access to some basic legal guidelines, improved refreshment facilities etc.” (Magistrate)

HM Courts & Tribunals Service has already established alternative ways users can interact with our services, such as the use of video link, and we are looking to expand these provisions to provide more choice than is currently available. This includes exploring whether we can appropriately make use of civic buildings for certain types of hearings. Full consideration as to the suitability of buildings to host court hearings will always be given before any decision is made.

We have carefully considered the access to justice arguments made in response to the consultation. In relation to hearings for those in custody we will, where appropriate, use Gateshead as an alternative to Peterlee. Travel times from Consett to Gateshead are around 30 minutes by car and 46 minutes by bus (which run every 30 minutes). The court in Gateshead is within five minutes walking distance of the bus station. In addition we have identified sites within Consett itself which may be suitable for locating a remote video link to enable victims and witnesses (and others where appropriate) to give evidence without needing to travel to court.

An important aspect of reform is to strengthen our working relationships with our judicial and Criminal Justice System (CJS) partners and work together to achieve realistic outcomes.

“If a defendant commits an offence when subject to a suspended order, there may be presumption that a sentence is activated and is often activated there and then. Contempt situations may arise and the magistrates need the option of committing the contemnor to the cells.” (Professional user)

Careful consideration will be given to the listing of cases and the practicalities of redistributing the workload.

One response made reference to provisions for youths should Consett Magistrates' Court close.

A review was undertaken of the cell accommodation at the magistrates' courts in Cleveland and Durham and as a result action was taken to centralise youth courts. For example Hartlepool youths now attend at Teesside Magistrates' Court. We will ensure that all the appropriate provisions are made before relocating youth court hearings to the receiving site.

Other considerations

A concern was raised that the Durham Civil and Family Justice Centre (CFJC) did not have the capacity to receive bail and family work from Consett. A full analysis has been undertaken which supports the proposition for the receiving of work. It is proposed that bail cases will be dealt with at Durham Civil and Family Justice Centre alongside tribunal work from the Elvet House integration, which is also to be housed there.

Decision

All the points raised by respondents to the consultation have been analysed and following careful consideration, the Lord Chancellor has decided to close Consett Magistrates' Court and move its custody work to Peterlee Magistrates' Court. Family work will move to Durham Civil and Family Justice Centre. In some instances work may be moved to Durham Civil and Family Justice Centre, Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court or Gateshead Magistrates' Court, based on whichever best meets the individual requirements of a case.

Implementation

Consultation with the Departmental Trade Union on staffing impacts will take place over the coming months. There are a number of factors to consider before Consett Magistrates' Court can close. Attached with this document is an indicative timetable for implementation. Please note this timetable is subject to change as the programme progresses.

Halifax County Court and Family Court

The Lord Chancellor has decided that Halifax County Court and Family Court should be closed and the work moved to Bradford Combined Court.

A total of 26 responses were received relating to Halifax County Court and Family Court. Of these:

- six were from members of staff
- six were from professional court users
- five were from members of the judiciary
- five were from members of the public
- one was from a magistrate
- one was from a Member of Parliament
- one was from another public sector body
- one was from a union or staff group

Of these responses none were in favour of the proposals, three were neutral and 23 were opposed.

Access to justice

Halifax County Court and Family Court is one of five county courts operating in West Yorkshire, the others are at Leeds, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Bradford. The court deals with civil matters, bankruptcy, high court, divorce and children matters.

Halifax County Court and Family Court is situated nine miles from Bradford Combined Court.

All responses made reference to access to justice.

"The journey times set out in the proposal assume that all court users will travel only from Halifax to Bradford. This is simply not the case many of them have significant journeys to get to Halifax before travelling on to Bradford. The time estimates and costs of journeys in the proposal are seriously flawed." (Judiciary)

Closing courts inevitably results in some people needing to travel further to reach their nearest court; this was the primary concern for many consultees. It is important to note that the nearest court is not always the one which people will be required to attend. For county courts, in some cases people can select the court where the case is heard but for other cases the venue is mandated based on the address of one of the parties. In some cases there is no need to attend court at all.

“We have concerns over the accuracy of travel times due to the nature and geography of the Calderdale area. It is a large and often rural area and a significant proportion of the population does not live within 20 minutes of a train station, nor is transport always straight forward. We estimate an increase in travel time of 100% for some of our current court users.” (Magistrate).

“The court covers a larger geographical area. Some areas within our jurisdiction are very rural.” (Staff member)

In more rural areas we are committed to providing alternative ways to access our services, including (where appropriate) the use of other civic buildings.

The court will consider applications to conduct business with the court by alternative means where possible. In exceptional cases start times of hearings may be delayed to allow later attendance due to travel difficulties, this would be considered on a case by case basis.

The changes we are making will make it easier for people to access justice. Going to court can be very stressful, especially for vulnerable people. We are reforming the system so that fewer people will need to physically attend court.

“The proposals do not take into account the impact on our local economy of moving the courts to Bradford. Calderdale has a thriving legal services industry. It is anticipated that a number of criminal and civil law firms will close their Calderdale office should the proposals go ahead. This in turn will have a knock-on-impact in those local businesses that service the law firms.” (Public Sector)

Whilst local economies may experience some impact in towns where courts and tribunals close, this is expected to be slight and the overall effects minimal as services are transferred to areas nearby.

“We are keen to ensure that justice is served in the local community. Local Magistrates apply in-depth knowledge and understanding of our local communities to apply fair and equitable judgements.” (Magistrate)

Magistrates are valued members of the judiciary and work well together for the benefit of the communities they serve, wherever they are delivering justice. HM Courts & Tribunals Service will work with individuals to ensure, where possible, that any needs are met and reasonable adjustments are made as and when necessary. We expect the process of local people being tried by local magistrates to continue, with magistrates covering larger areas than at present.

Value for money

During the 2014-15 financial year the operating costs at Halifax County Court and Family Court were approximately £96,000. Halifax County Court and Family Court would require investment for maintenance work.

Some responses made references to value for money.

"The enabling works at Bradford County (not even able to accommodate current needs) will be substantial - in the order of hundreds of thousands of pounds. There will be delays costing at least £175,000 in transferring the County Court to Bradford whilst substantial enabling work is done, if indeed it can be achieved."
(Judiciary)

Substantial enabling works are required at Bradford Combined Court which involves the creation of one or two additional hearing rooms for district judges. A feasibility study has been conducted as to how this can happen and it is evident that the savings associated with the closure of the two buildings in Halifax far outweigh the cost of the enabling works.

"The proposal states that the operating costs of the Halifax County Court and Family Court during 2014/2015 was £115,000. We assume that this sum does not include any costs that would still have to be supported wherever the Court conducted its business, but the proposal does not give any details." (Magistrate)

Annual running costs associated with the building being proposed for exit are based on the 2014-15 financial accounting data for HM Courts & Tribunals Service and include rents, variable costs (such as printing and postage), fixed costs (such as rates and service charges) and semi-variable costs (such as telecoms and maintenance). This reflects the most up to date actual financial information available. Running costs do not include other costs such as staff costs (such as staff salaries), PFI charges, judicial costs (such as judicial salaries), trial costs (such as payment to jurors) or noneconomic costs (such as depreciation).

Operational efficiency

Reference was also made to operational efficiencies.

"The proposal describes utilisation as 22%. I understand that it is accepted that this figure is incorrect. Had the calculation been based solely on the use of District Judge Chambers then the percentage utilisation rate would have been significantly higher." (Judiciary)

The utilisation figure in the consultation (22%) was incorrect as it was based on three hearing rooms being available for use but we accept that only two hearing rooms are usable at any one time, therefore the utilisation figure has been understated. The workload from Halifax County Court will not be an issue for the receiving site as the updated figure has been calculated on sitting data rather than utilisation data.

"The proposal recognises that enabling works would be required at Bradford County Court to provide an additional multi purpose hearing room with associated chambers. There is clearly no accommodation to provide for extra judiciary in Bradford." (Judiciary)

"Social housing have a lot a short hearings listed for 5 or 10 minutes...Will Bradford have the spare capacity for the additional workload, especially with digitalisation around the corner, would these hearing rooms be needed as part of the bigger plan?" (Professional user)

There will be sufficient capacity after the proposed enabling works at Bradford Combined Court to accommodate the civil and family hearings from Halifax County Court and Family Court. Consideration will also be given to listing hearings at Huddersfield County Court and Leeds Combined Court in addition to Bradford Combined Court and these will be determined on a case by case basis.

Alternative provision

Numerous responses made reference to alternative provisions and a number of these raised the possibility and benefits of co-locating Halifax County Court and Family Court into Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' and Family Court.

"The Prescott Street building should close at the end of December. A consolidated Combined Court (and Tribunal) Centre should be established at the current Magistrates building." (Judiciary)

"If a decision is taken to close both Halifax Courts I struggle to see the reasoning behind the family work to Bradford. They do not have the judicial resource or space and the move is totally against the principles of single Family Court in terms of centralisation. Surely the obvious venue is Leeds? Arguments that there are insufficient resources here are weak – there are insufficient resources in Bradford." (Judiciary)

"Co-location of the two jurisdictions and the Tribunal Service in the Calderdale Magistrates building (creating the "Calderdale Combined Court), and locating all Bradford Family work (both Magistrates and District judge) in the Bradford Magistrates court building (creating the 'Bradford Magistrates Court and Family Law Centre') would avoid all the costs and detrimental effects that relocation of the Halifax Courts to Bradford would generate." (Magistrate)

In an increasingly digital age, users will not always need to attend hearings in person in order to access the justice system and whilst we have already established alternative ways users can interact with our services, we are looking to expand these provisions to provide more choice than is currently available. For example through making better use of technology, including video conferencing and exploring whether we can appropriately make use of civic buildings for certain types of hearings.

We also need to reduce the current costs of running our estate by increasing the utilisation rate at our courts.

It may be that due to the geographical location of some of our users, it would be more appropriate for hearings to be listed at other court sites across the cluster and in order to ensure that access to justice is maintained, consideration will be given on a case by case basis to some of the work being listed at, for example, Huddersfield County Court.

Decision

All the points raised by respondents to the consultation have been analysed and following careful consideration, the Lord Chancellor has decided to close Halifax County Court and Family Court and move its work to Bradford Combined Court.

Implementation

Consultation with the Departmental Trade Union on staffing impacts will take place over the coming months. There are a number of factors to consider before Halifax County Court and Family Court can close. Attached with this document is an indicative timetable for implementation. Please note this timetable is subject to change as the programme progresses.

Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' and Family Court

The Lord Chancellor has decided that Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' and Family Court should close and move the work to Bradford Magistrates' Court.

A total of 24 responses were received which related to Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' and Family Court. Of these:

- eight were from professional court users
- three were from magistrates
- three were from members of the judiciary
- three were from members of the public
- two were from members of staff
- two were from other public sector bodies
- one was from a criminal justice partner
- one was from a Member of parliament
- one was from a union or staff group

Of these, all were opposed to the closure.

Access to justice

Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' and Family Court is situated nine miles from Bradford Magistrates' Court.

All responses made reference to access to justice.

"There is a significant difference between cost cutting and fair and equitable justice e.g. someone on a low/no wage would struggle financially in getting from the far side of Halifax to Bradford, would face the prospect of no legal aid and would be faced with disastrous court fees if found guilty." (Magistrate)

"Residents at the far end of the Calder Valley, from the towns of Hebden Bridge and Todmorden, would struggle to get to Bradford within an hour by car."
(Professional user)

Whilst it is accepted that some journeys to reach court may take longer particularly for those who reside in more rural areas, we are committed to providing alternative ways to access our services, including (where appropriate) the use of other civic buildings.

The court will consider applications to conduct business by alternative means where possible. In exceptional circumstances start times of hearings may be delayed to allow later attendance due to travel difficulties, this would be considered on a case by case basis.

"The closure proposals ignore the impact on the local economy of moving all criminal and civil work to Bradford: at least eight criminal law firms and a similar number of civil law firms will have to close their offices and it is very doubtful indeed that many will be able to transfer offices and staff to Bradford."
(Professional user)

Whilst local economies may experience some impact in towns where courts and tribunals close, this is expected to be slight and the overall effect minimal as services will be transferred to areas nearby.

Consideration will be given when listing cases in relation to both criminal and civil work depending on the nature of the work and the geographic location of the court user.

Value for money

Some responses made reference to value for money.

"The substantial part of £36000 already invested in the digitalisation of the Calderdale Magistrates would be wasted." (Judiciary)

In relation to the investment for the installation of click share at the court, the equipment can be relocated to any site within the Ministry of Justice estate where there is a need.

"Furthermore I believe the Calderdale Magistrates Court, a beautiful listed building, may prove difficult to sell. If this were to remain empty it will still need to be maintained by the Ministry of Justice thus making no real savings. There are court buildings which stand empty and still remain unsold from the last courts closure programme." (Member of the public)

The last round of reform, Court Estates Reform Programme (CERP), throughout the North East Region showed that all buildings, with the exception of two that are currently under negotiation, have either been sold, handed back to the landlord at the end of the lease or the long leaseholds (999 years) were surrendered back to the authorities, such as the police.

Operational efficiency

Few responses raised issues in respect of operational efficiency.

"We accept that all courtrooms are not fully utilised every day but that is likely to be the case in most Courts given their workload and the number of available magistrates. In the past Halifax has undertaken road traffic cases for West Yorkshire and there are clearly facilities available to undertake this role in the future given the likelihood of additional case pressures on larger courts locally."
(Professional user)

We need to move towards an estate with buildings which are more efficient and enable flexible listing of court and tribunal business whilst also giving users more certainty when their cases will be heard.

We need to increase our ability to use the estate flexibly across the criminal jurisdiction and separately across the civil, family and tribunal (CFT) jurisdictions. We will consider listing at other court sites inclusive of those in Kirklees and Leeds.

Alternative provision

Some responses mentioned alternative provisions.

“Looking locally for shared access to another venue in which to hold regular hearings. However this would have to be suitable to meet the needs of waiting and interview space as well as the hearing and be a suitable building from which the bailiffs could operate for the safety of other users.” (Professional user)

“For the court users in Calderdale it would be beneficial not to close the courts. However, if that is still going to be the decision after the consultation then it will be worth considering whether other buildings in Halifax can be used.” (Professional user)

To enable efficiency in the longer term HM Courts & Tribunals Service needs to increase the use of the estate wherever possible irrespective of current administrative boundaries. We also need to reduce the current cost of running of our estate by increasing the utilisation rate at our courts.

“Co-location of the two jurisdictions and the Tribunal Service in the Calderdale Magistrates building (creating the “Calderdale Combined Court), and locating all Bradford Family work (both magistrates and District judge) in the Bradford Magistrates court Building (creating the ‘Bradford Magistrates Court and Family Law Centre’) would avoid all the costs and detrimental effects that relocation of the Halifax Courts to Bradford would generate.” (Calderdale Bench)

“We are concerned that the use of public buildings would have a greater risk to court users and legal professionals.” (Professional user).

The proposed closure of Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates’ and Family Court requires no enabling works and the overall savings from the closure of both Halifax sites will be greater than any sums which may be required for any enabling works in Bradford Combined Court.

Some consideration will be given to work being listed at Kirklees Magistrates’ Court in relation to the geographical location of court users and to ensure that access to justice is maintained, including in more rural locations. HM Courts & Tribunals Service will also explore whether we can appropriately make use of civic buildings for certain types of hearings. Full consideration to the suitability of such buildings to host hearings and security will always be given before any decisions are made.

Decision

All the points raised by respondents to the consultation have been analysed and following careful consideration, the Lord Chancellor has decided to close Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates’ and Family Court and move its work to Bradford Magistrates’ Court.

Implementation

Consultation with the Departmental Trade Union on staffing impacts will take place over the coming months. There are a number of factors to consider before Halifax Magistrates’ Court can close. Attached with this document is an indicative timetable for implementation. Please note this timetable is subject to change as the programme progresses.

Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court

The Lord Chancellor has decided that Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court should be closed and the work moved to Teesside Magistrates' and Teesside Combined Court.

A total of 27 responses were received which related to Hartlepool Magistrates' and County Court. Of these:

- 10 were from magistrates
- five were from members of the public
- five were from other public sector bodies
- three were from criminal justice partners
- three were from professional court users
- one was from a union or staff group

Of these responses one was in favour of the proposals, one was neutral and 25 were opposed.

Access to justice

All of the responses made reference to access to justice.

“Geography and economics appear to have had no bearing upon this decision. Hartlepool is a long distance from Middlesbrough on public transport. It is costly to obtain a return ticket to the same.” (Professional User)

Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court is located approximately 14 miles from Middlesbrough and there are excellent road, rail and bus links.

The cost of an anytime return rail ticket is £4.50 and the cost of a day rider plus which allows unlimited travel throughout Teesside and Hartlepool is £5.10. Whilst there is an acceptance that travel will be costly, attending court is an infrequent occurrence for the vast majority of people.

In addition, the changes we are making to our services will mean fewer people physically going to court, which will in turn make access to justice easier. To ensure that access to justice is maintained, we are committed to providing alternative ways for users to access our services.

The cost of travel for victims and witnesses can be claimed subject to regulations. Likewise if a defendant was acquitted following a hearing then travel costs can be claimed subject to similar regulations.

“The victim may end up using the same public transport as the defendant.”
(Magistrate)

The possibility of parties to a case travelling to court by the same form of public transport is one that exists at present. If a party to a case believes that they will travel to court in the same bus or train as another party and is concerned for their safety, the court may consider applications made by parties to be represented at court by other means, where possible.

“Court start times are not conducive to the needs of certain court user groups.”
(Magistrate)

In exceptional cases, start times of hearings may be delayed to allow later attendance due to travel difficulties, this would be considered on a case by case basis.

Value for money

During the 2014-15 financial year, operating costs at Hartlepool Magistrates’ Court and County Court were approximately £348,000.

Several responses raised concerns about value for money.

“Is the saving regards the building lease a real saving, if it is left empty or used by another Civil Service it becomes a case of merely moving the cost from one department to another.” (Magistrate)

“Unless able to sell the court building to another owner, would not save the operating costs approximately £345,000 per year that is mentioned; since it is a purpose built property, it is unlikely to easily use it for something else.” (Magistrate)

The building is owned by the local authority and is subject to a 999 year peppercorn rent lease. If HM Courts & Tribunals Service were to vacate the building, operating costs would be saved. During this period only rates would be payable. HM Courts & Tribunals Service would have the opportunity to either surrender the lease back to the Local Authority or sell our interest in the lease.

In summary, savings would be made until disposal.

“The building could be sold but previously more than 100 courts were closed and only 3 have actually been sold, but buildings still have to be maintained.”
(Magistrate)

The last round of reform; Court Estates Reform Programme (CERP), throughout the North East Region has shown that all buildings, with the exception of two which are currently under negotiation, have either been sold, handed back to the landlord at the end of the lease or are long leaseholds (999 years) which were surrendered back to the appropriate authorities.

“The issue of the lift calls into question the validity of the consultation process or at least suggests that others have made decisions effecting Hartlepool with one eye on a possible closure agenda.” (Magistrate)

The lift at Hartlepool Magistrates’ Court and County Court was taken out of service on 5 February 2015 as the floor selector and panel were beyond repair. It became clear that given the antiquity of the lift and from a value for money and operational efficiency viewpoint, repairs were not only extremely costly but a major refurbishment or

replacement was required. As the capital funding for such schemes is limited and has to be prioritised year on year, this work at Hartlepool was deferred to a later years maintenance programme as higher priority works at other sites had to take precedence.

“Hartlepool has just undergone significant investment with Clickshare.”
(Professional user)

HM Courts & Tribunals Service owns the click share equipment that has been installed into Hartlepool Magistrates’ Court and County Court. The equipment can therefore be relocated to any site within the Ministry of Justice estate.

Operational efficiency

Hartlepool Magistrates’ Court and County Court is underused. During 2014-15 financial year, Hartlepool Magistrates’ and County Court was utilised for approximately 47% of its capacity. There are five courtrooms one of which is not used as the facilities are out of date.

Some responses referred to operational efficiency.

“The utilisation figures are flawed. They do not take into account short term and planned resource restructuring actions undertaken by the JBG.” (Magistrate)

Utilisation figures are accurate and have been calculated using the 2014-15 sitting hours workload data from the HM Courts & Tribunals Service performance database for crown, magistrates’ and county courts as a share of total hearing room capacity. Capacity is based on an assumption of 248 sitting days per year and five hours per day for each room.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service regularly reviews workload trends across all jurisdictions and the proposals included in the consultation are based on current and projected workloads. Any exceptional changes would be handled through flexible use of the court capacity at that time. Nationally there is an acceptance that there are low volumes of certain case types and to overcome this, it is a common occurrence for Judicial Business Groups to consider the amalgamation of lists across clusters to maximise efficiency.

“If Hartlepool’s court is allowed to close, could this be the demise of services currently offered by Probation and treatment services, and would they move to where the court building is?” (Magistrate)

HM Courts & Tribunals Service accepts that any proposed changes are likely to have an impact on other service providers and we are committed to working with them in order that mutually agreeable solutions are reached.

Probation, Witness Care, Crown Prosecution Service and Drug Treatment Services all have offices within Teesside Magistrates’ Court.

Alternative provision of Services

“Sunderland work could be embraced within Peterlee and the opportunity to transfer work from Hartlepool to Peterlee has not been considered.” (Magistrates)

There is capacity at Peterlee Magistrates' Court, and listing of work there will be considered, however, this could cause some difficulties as there will be a cross over of police force areas between Cleveland and Durham, although these are not considered insurmountable.

"The SMT unanimously supports the use of digital technology however part of the Northern Pennines are incapable of achieving a signal...broadband is patchy."
(Judiciary)

HM Courts & Tribunals Service understands that in some remote areas, IT services can be restricted. We remain committed to providing an effective and efficient service to all our users, and consideration will be given to any issues on a case-by-case basis. For instance, we are exploring whether we can appropriately make use of civic buildings for certain types of hearing, and in some exceptional cases start times of hearings may be delayed to allow later attendance due to travel difficulties. We acknowledge that this is however an issue for the minority and improvements continue to be made in an ever expanding digital age.

"An alternative maybe to install video link rooms in the town for people to attend a virtual court." (Magistrate)

"Set up a digital Hartlepool court in the part of the existing building or a leased office." (Magistrate)

Where appropriate, HM Courts & Tribunals Service is committed to providing alternatives to attending court; both suggestions would be deemed appropriate and negotiations with other organisations to explore these options will be considered.

"There will be a necessity to have Youth Courts centralised in order to ensure that the adoption of the 'Birmingham ruling' remains prevalent." (Professional user)

Following a review undertaken of the cell accommodation at the magistrates' courts in the cluster, action was taken to centralise youth courts, from Hartlepool to Teesside, therefore this issue has already been addressed.

Other considerations

"The long held and respected concept of Local Justice will not be possible under the proposed closure and the idea that Hartlepool Magistrates would sit on the Hartlepool cases would become impossible to sustain." (Magistrate)

Magistrates are valued members of the judiciary and work well together for the benefit of the communities they serve, wherever they are delivering justice. Access to justice is not just about proximity to a court.

"The proposal will leave a town already in crisis in a more deprived state and will not help/support offenders to find a better quality of life." (Professional user)

Whilst local economies may experience some impact in towns where courts and tribunals will close, this is expected to be slight and the overall effect minimal as services are transferred to areas nearby. We must have due regard to ensure our estate is utilised to deliver justice efficiently and effectively while providing value for money.

“How much time will police waste having to travel to Teesside to obtain a warrant on a daily basis?” (Magistrate)

An important aspect of reform is to strengthen our working relationships with our justice partners, including exploring alternative methods of dealing with our work, it does not necessarily follow that attendance at court will always be required. HM Courts & Tribunals Service will explore modern technology not just to make the justice system more accessible but to reduce the costs of the whole justice system.

Decision

All the points raised by respondents to the consultation have been analysed and following careful consideration, the Lord Chancellor has decided to close Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court and move its work to Teesside Magistrates' and Teesside Combined Court.

Implementation

Consultation with the Departmental Trade Union on staffing impacts will take place over the coming months. There are a number of factors to consider before Hartlepool Magistrates' and County Court can close. Attached with this document is an indicative timetable for implementation. Please note this timetable is subject to change as the programme progresses.

Morpeth County Court

The Lord Chancellor has decided that Morpeth County Court should be closed and its work moved to Newcastle Combined Court.

A total of 19 responses were received which related to Morpeth County Court. Of these:

- seven were from professional court users
- four were from magistrates
- three were from members of the judiciary
- three were from members of other public sector bodies
- one was from a professional user
- one was from a union or staff group

Of the responses none were in favour of the proposals, two were neutral whilst 17 were opposed.

Access to justice

Morpeth County Court is a stand alone county court and there are a further five combined county courts operating in Northumbria; the others are at Gateshead, Newcastle, North Shields, South Shields, and Sunderland. The courthouse is situated in Morpeth and covers the North and South East parts of Northumberland.

All responses made reference to access to justice issues.

“We do not find your data helpful. It takes no account of the practical difficulties involved in travelling from Northumberland to Newcastle at peak times. Because of traffic congestion a one way journey can take nearly one hour without taking into account parking difficulties.” (Other public sector body)

Travel times information and public transport costs were provided as a guide only. The main towns in Northumberland are all served by a frequent bus service to Newcastle. Journey times to South East Northumberland are between 30 minutes and one hour.

There are a number of park and ride facilities available just outside of Newcastle and buses run every 10 minutes into the centre. An approximate cost of a day ticket is £3.20.

“One of the reasons used to justify the closure of Alnwick was the availability of the court at Bedlington; Family proceedings were subsequently transferred to Morpeth to enable two tiers of the Family judiciary (District Judges and Lay Justices) to work together in a local Hearing Centre of the Family Court.” (Magistrate)

The towns of Alnwick and Amble have a regular public transport service to Bedlington although journeys by public transport are just over one hour. Where a longer journey would be necessitated to arrive at court for 10:00am, listing arrangements can facilitate a

later scheduling of cases to assist those with transport issues. This will be considered on a case by case basis.

Users should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend hearings, but we also know that in an increasingly digital age, users do not always need to attend hearings in person in order to access the justice system. To ensure that access to justice is maintained including in rural areas, we are committed to providing alternative ways for users to access our services, including (where appropriate) the use of other civic buildings.

Value for money

During the 2014-15 financial year, operating costs at Morpeth County Court were approximately £258,000.

“We consider that financial savings made by closing Morpeth County Court would be minimal.” (Magistrates Association)

“Costing within the impact assessment allude to the operational cost of the court being £255,130. Following further examination it was said by HMCTS to be £198,182. HMCTS occupies the accommodation within the property by way of Memorandum of Term of Occupation which is renewable yearly. There is no indication that the building is to be vacated or sold by the owner and it is our suggestion that the MOTO should be renegotiated on more favourable (cheaper) terms. If cost is the only reason to close Morpeth Court, and we can see no other, this is an opportunity to reduce the cost.” (Magistrate)

At the time of consultation the total operating costs for Morpeth County Court were approximately £255,000. This figure has been revised to approximately £258,000 to reflect current prices. The figure of £198,182 when broken down relates to fixed costs which unfortunately can not be broken down any further. This is an annual charge from the Department for Work & Pensions via their facilities management provider. It is essentially a single service charge for HM Courts & Tribunals Service occupation of part of the building and covering the proportionate share of rent, rates, ongoing maintenance and cleaning; in effect a share of all the fixed running costs of the building except variable costs such as utilities and security. Whilst the figure does seem quite high we can confirm it is accurate and the figure which appears in our published and audited accounts.

The estate is both costly and underused. There are 460 buildings in England and Wales, costing taxpayers £500 million per year. Last year, a third of those buildings sat empty for more than half their available hearing time.

Operational efficiency

Several responses made reference to operational efficiency.

“The figure of 44% said to reflect courtroom occupancy appears to have omitted the Family Proceedings.” (Magistrate)

The utilisation figure of 44% provided in the Morpeth County Court consultation proposal did not include family magistrates court sitting days. Supplementary data on judicial work held in chambers and informal rooms was therefore considered in addition to the published utilisation figure before a final decision was made regarding Morpeth County Court.

“We seriously doubt that Newcastle can absorb 32 extra court sitting days, there is already chronic overcrowding in Newcastle for the public and the judiciary.”
(Member of the judiciary)

A full analysis of sitting day allocation for both Morpeth and Newcastle has now been undertaken. To accommodate the Morpeth sittings, an additional district judge’s chamber is required at Newcastle Combined Court and the analysis has indicated that this will not prove a difficulty. In conjunction with this, there is also the possibility of additional capacity at the Moot Hall which could accommodate any overspill.

“Courts already use telephone hearings for non contested matters. This would not be possible in civil disputes such as trials where a Judge needs to hear oral evidence and see the witness.” (Professional user)

HM Courts & Tribunals Service will assess the criteria of certain applications and work with the judiciary in achieving the right outcomes. Where attendance at a hearing is needed, the use of other civic or public buildings will be taken into consideration ensuring that policies have been applied for example in relation to security.

Alternative provision of services

Responses included a number of suggestions to look at listing cases at other venues for example family cases due to the nature and complexity of the matters including emergency applications which require attendance at court.

“An alternative to closing the courts would be to rent other space within the same towns to allow members of the public, particularly those who are elderly or have disabilities to travel to their local court.” (Professional user)

“Should the Morpeth court ultimately close as proposed, we would seek assurances that the court office in Berwick upon Tweed remains open for local hearings.” (Professional user)

The consultation does not change the current position in relation to the courthouse in Berwick upon Tweed. We can confirm that the types of cases currently heard in Berwick will continue to be heard there so there is no impact on witnesses from the Berwick area as a direct result of this proposed merger of Local Justice Areas.

The exceptional geographic location of Berwick will continue to be taken into account from an access to justice perspective if any change is considered to listing of cases in the future. Any such proposals would be the subject of further consultation with court users and through that process of consultation the question of reasonableness and proportionality would be addressed.

“If Morpeth closes the family panel work should move to Bedlington and Berwick.”
(Magistrate)

An important aspect of reform is strengthening our working relationships with our stakeholder partners and it is essential that we take a staged approach to the development of our technology requirements.

Although the logistics of such arrangements would need to be carefully considered with our stakeholders we will consider alternative proposals in relation to the family work

currently heard at Morpeth to be heard at Mid and South East Northumberland Magistrates' Court (Bedlington) and Berwick in addition to Newcastle.

Other considerations

A number of comments related to poor accommodation at Newcastle Combined Court and that no suitable provision has been made in relation to magistrates sitting at Newcastle.

“Family Proceedings moved to Newcastle Combined Court from Gosforth Magistrates' Court some years ago. Two rooms were converted for use by the Family Magistracy, now courts 14 and 15. Court 14 has no secure entrance for magistrates. There was not then, and is not now, any designated room to which Family JP's can retire to prepare for sittings or consider cases. A section of the Judges' Dining room is used, unless it is required by the senior members of the judiciary for a meeting.” (Magistrate)

Newcastle Combined Court accommodates the Centralised Family Team who have revisited the system in relation to providing a designated space for retiring magistrates. The court staff recently put in place a “rota key” system whereby they control the booking of magistrates sitting in the family courts. Although there are currently no designated retiring rooms, plans are in place to ensure that where possible, the judicial dining room can be used for this purpose and if not available, then as an alternative, a courtroom is secured for use.

Decision

All the points raised by respondents to the consultation have been analysed and following careful consideration, the Lord Chancellor has decided to close Morpeth County Court and move its work to Newcastle Combined Court.

Implementation

Consultation with the Departmental Trade Union on staffing impacts will take place over the coming months. There are a number of factors to consider before Morpeth County Court can close. Attached with this document is an indicative timetable for implementation. Please note this timetable is subject to change as the programme progresses.

Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court

The Lord Chancellor has decided that Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court should be closed and the work moved to Sheffield Magistrates' Court and Sheffield Combined Court.

A total of 16 responses were received which related to Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court. Of these:

- four were from members of the public
- three were from members of the judiciary
- two were from magistrates
- two were from other public sector bodies
- two were from professional court users
- one was from a criminal justice partner
- one was from a Member of Parliament
- one was from a union or staff group

Of these responses three were in favour of the proposals and two were neutral whilst 11 were opposed.

Access to justice

Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is situated nine miles from Sheffield and there are excellent road, rail and bus links.

All responses made reference to access to justice.

“Though some of the population of Rotherham will have the means to travel to Sheffield, whether they are defendants, witnesses, victims or involved in a family hearing, it is likely that many may find such a journey daunting and expensive.” (Member of the judiciary)

“Bus services throughout the Borough are provided by a number of different operators and as such a single return ticket would not be available, instead requiring multiple tickets and increased costs.” (Member of Parliament)

“There is a real problem that Rotherham people with limited means, mental health issues or disabilities will see the journey to Sheffield and its attendant cost as a real barrier to local justice.” (Magistrate)

There are frequent bus and train services to Sheffield with journeys taking between approximately 20 and 30 minutes. If travelling by car, a number of park and ride stations are available around Sheffield at a cost of £4.50 per day, which include bus and tram fares. Buses and trams run every 10 minutes from the park and ride stations into

Sheffield. For travel throughout the whole of the South Yorkshire area a travel master gold day ticket can be purchased at a cost of £7.60.

The cost of travel for victims and witnesses can be claimed, subject to regulations. Likewise, if a defendant was acquitted following a hearing then travel costs can be claimed, subject to similar regulations.

In exceptional cases start times of hearings may be delayed to allow later attendance due to travel difficulties, this would be considered on a case by case basis.

A number of train and bus companies operate localised discount schemes and there are a number of schemes for the disabled. The City Council assesses the individual's needs and then works with the individual to discuss travel arrangements.

Access to justice is not just about proximity to a court. We are committed to providing alternatives to travel. The changes we are making will make it easier for people to access justice. We are reforming the system so that fewer people will need to physically go to court.

Value for money

During the 2014-15 financial year operating costs at Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court were approximately £646,000.

One response made reference to value for money.

"The consultation states running costs to be £640,000 in 2014-15. We understand that much of these costs are made up by business rates which stand at approximately £250,000 and a centralised contract for services including security and cleaning which amount to £200,000 per year. These costs are out of proportion with other premises of similar size and could represent an opportunity to reduce expenditure and enable the court to continue to operate." (Member of Parliament)

The amount payable for business rates is based on the rateable value. All magistrates' courts are assessed for business rates on the notional rebuild of the property as at 1 April 2008 and the valuations are influenced mainly by the age and size of the property. Rotherham Magistrates' Court is a modern property, built in 1994, and so the unit price will be relatively high compared with an older property of a similar size. These costs are in line with other courts of a similar size.

Operational efficiency

During the 2014-15 financial year, utilisation at the court was approximately 32% of its capacity.

Three responses related to operational efficiency.

"We believe the usage figure which the consultation document states to have been approximately 32% in 2014-15 to be inaccurate. Four of these courtrooms have never been put into use and as such the overall figure used in the consultation is skewed." (Member of Parliament)

Utilisation figures are calculated using the 2014-15 sitting hours workload data from the HM Courts & Tribunals Service performance database for crown, magistrates' and county courts sharing a total of hearing room capacity. Capacity is based on an assumption of 248 sitting days per year and five hours sitting per day for each room.

"I issue emergency applications without notice in Rotherham Court, sitting and waiting while a DJ fits us in due to the good working relationships we have with court staff and will no longer be able to do this. Sheffield is already very busy and it concerns me that they will not be able to fit in such applications so quickly."
(Professional user)

Where appropriate, emergency applications will always be dealt with on the day of issue, this is commonplace across all court sites and Sheffield is no exception. Given that there are greater numbers of judiciary sitting at Sheffield Combined Court compared to Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court, this should build in additional flexibility to hear such cases.

An important aspect of reform is working closely with our stakeholder partners. There is significant work already underway to modernise our court procedures. The judiciary themselves have been leading the thinking on reforming the courts and tribunals.

"The consultation states that Rotherham's workload could be absorbed by facilities in Sheffield, which are stated to be underused. However no figures are given for the available capacity of these facilities." (Member of Parliament)

A full analysis of the sitting day allocation for both Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court and Sheffield Magistrates' Court and Combined Court has been undertaken. Both crime and family hearings conducted by magistrates from both Rotherham Magistrates' Court and family work currently heard in Sheffield Combined Court can be incorporated into the sitting patterns at Sheffield Magistrates' Court, without additional courtroom allocation. There is sufficient cell capacity at Sheffield Magistrates' Court to cope with future integration demands. Sheffield Magistrates' Court is currently utilised to approximately 44% of its capacity and Sheffield Combined Court to approximately 59% of its capacity.

Alternative provisions of service

Some responses made reference to alternative provisions.

"Rotherham is pretty much in the middle of a triangle formed by Barnsley, Sheffield and Doncaster. Is there merit in splitting the Rotherham catchment area, in particular work from the east of Rotherham might conveniently be re- assigned to Doncaster." (Member of the judiciary)

Consideration will be given on a case by case basis to the postcode location of our users which will determine how the work will be allocated in relation to the geographical split and whether some of the work from Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court might more appropriately be heard in either Barnsley Law Courts or Doncaster Magistrates' Court and Family Court.

To ensure that access to justice is maintained, including in more rural locations, we are committed to providing alternative ways for users to access our services including (where appropriate) the use of other civic buildings.

“Some sort of video conferencing may be useful but realistically it will not work in many cases and I don’t know where you would set this up.” (Member of the public)

We already have well established alternative ways that users can interact with our services. For example; enabling police officers to give evidence over a live link; processes to enable victims, witnesses and defendants to attend hearings over video link; and users in some jurisdictions have cases progressed or considered through telephone hearings or no papers meaning that they don’t need to attend a hearing in person at all.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service will explore whether we can make appropriate use of civic buildings for certain types of hearings. Full consideration as to the suitability of such buildings to host court hearings will always be given before any decisions are made.

Other considerations

“Magistrates in the Community....This is unlikely to survive in the present form if the court closes and magistrates are dispersed to other areas.” (Magistrate)

The success of the “Magistrates in the Community” programme form an important part of the Rotherham community and HM Courts & Tribunals Service will work with its members to ensure continuation of the project.

Decision

All the points raised by respondents to the consultation have been analysed and following careful consideration, the Lord Chancellor has decided to close Rotherham Magistrates’ Court, County Court and Family Court and its work moved to Sheffield Magistrates’ Court and Sheffield Combined Court.

Implementation

Consultation with the Departmental Trade Union on staffing impacts will take place over the coming months. There are a number of factors to consider before Rotherham Magistrates’ and County Court can close. Attached with this document is an indicative timetable for implementation. Please note this timetable is subject to change as the programme progresses.

Scunthorpe Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court

The Lord Chancellor has decided that Scunthorpe Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court should be closed and the work moved to Grimsby Magistrates' Court and Grimsby Combined Court.

A total of 37 responses were received which related to Scunthorpe Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court. Of these:

- 14 were from magistrates
- six were from members of the public
- five were from professional court users
- four were from criminal justice partners
- three were from members of the judiciary (individual and collective responses)
- two were from members of HM Courts & Tribunals Service staff
- one was from a Member of Parliament
- one was from a public sector body
- one was from a union or staff group

Of these responses, one was in favour, three were neutral and 33 were opposed to the closure.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service would like to apologise for an error in the consultation document. It was stated that there are four magistrates' courts operating in Humberside. The correct number is five, Bridlington Magistrates' Court being the fifth.

Access to justice

Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is situated 28 miles from Grimsby and there are road, rail and bus links to and from the receiving site.

The majority of responses made reference to access to justice, the main themes being:

1. Public transport challenges

"Public transport times into Scunthorpe do not necessarily allow connection to the trains and buses in Grimsby in order to be there for 9.30am." (Professional user)

"Many villages only have a rudimentary bus service at best and those living in villages with small stations which are served by the railway line are not served by the Transpennine Express which goes to Grimsby." (Judiciary in the Humber Group of Courts)

“Are applicants and respondents in family law cases – perhaps already struggling with money and child care – to be forced to travel 80 miles a day to seek justice from the courts?” (Magistrate via Member of Parliament)

There is an acceptance that of all the proposed North East court closures, Scunthorpe has the longest travel distance to the receiving site (28 miles), however, access to justice is not just about proximity to a court. We are committed to providing alternatives to travel. The changes we are making will make it easier for people to get access to justice.

Users should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend hearings, we also know that, in an increasingly digital age, users will not always need to attend hearings in person in order to access the justice system. To ensure that access to justice is maintained, including in more rural areas, we are committed to providing alternative ways for users to access our services, including (where appropriate) the use of other civic buildings.

Attending court is an infrequent occurrence for the vast majority of people but for those who do become involved, the listing of the relevant hearing will, where such circumstances are advised to the listing department, take account of any likely travel difficulties. It is accepted, and regrettable, that some attendees will face significant journeys but they are a small minority and we must have greater regard for the majority.

2. Cost of travelling

“Many of our customers are on low incomes or benefits and struggle to meet the cost of day to day living. If they are then expected to travel to Grimsby many will not be able to afford it and may decide not to attend.” (Staff members)

“...in our area it is not feasible for ‘local justice’ to be served when there is a 5 hour round trip at a cost of probably one third of the weekly benefit rate.” (Magistrate)

Victims and witnesses are entitled to recover expenses subject to regulations. If a defendant was acquitted following a hearing then travel costs can be claimed subject to similar regulations.

Going to court can be a very stressful experience, especially for vulnerable people and we are reforming the system so that fewer people will need to physically go to court. As stated above, we are committed to providing alternative ways for users to access our services.

3. Vulnerable victims/witnesses will be disadvantaged

“Our Women’s Centre in Scunthorpe is located almost directly across the road from the Court Centre, in the building we offer free crèche facilities. Unfortunately, due to the time restraint on our crèche facilities, should our service users be required to travel this would not be a service we would be able to offer.” (Professional user)

“People involved in Domestic Violence cases or a particular volatile divorce, or children’s proceedings will also be placed in a vulnerable position by potentially travelling on the same public transport for longer scheduled periods of time.” (Staff members)

The possibility of all parties to a case travelling to court by the same form of public transport is one that exists at present. If a party to a case believes that they will travel to court in the same bus or train as another party, and they are concerned for their safety, the court may consider an application made by them to be represented at court by other means.

To ensure that access to justice is maintained, including in more rural locations, we are committed to providing alternative ways for users to access our services.

There are provisions in place to enable some categories of victims and witnesses (such as children, vulnerable adults and victims of sexual assault) to give evidence using screens, in private or by video link without having to come to court and we are looking to expand these provisions to include all witnesses and to provide more choice than is currently the case.

4. The dispensation of local justice

“.....Justice should be a priority at the local level to dispense a sentence with local knowledge.” (Magistrate)

“Our Magistrates have many years of experience with a fundamental knowledge of Scunthorpe and its surrounding area.” (Professional user)

“.....real barriers will be placed in the way of those people participating in the magistracy with the likely impact of the magistracy becoming less diverse.” (Magistrate)

Magistrates are valued members of the judiciary and work well together for the benefit of the communities they serve, wherever they are delivering justice. HM Courts & Tribunals Service will work with individuals to ensure, where possible, that their needs are met and reasonable adjustments are made as and when necessary. We expect the process of local people being tried by local magistrates to continue, with magistrates covering larger areas than at present.

Value for money

During the 2014-15 financial year operating costs at Scunthorpe Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court were approximately £271,000.

Few responses raised concerns about value for money.

“...by shutting Scunthorpe it will save £268,000, not taking into account the relocation of some court services, the scaling down of the building and redundancy payments, probably more than could be saved will be spent.” (Magistrate via Member of Parliament)

“There is very little data available, but clearly the running costs of Scunthorpe are mainly operational costs that would follow the workload.” (Member of the public)

The majority of operating costs at Scunthorpe would be saved. Operating costs do not include staffing costs and as such would not follow the workload.

The 999 year lease has no significant value and would be surrendered back to the police, whereas the Charter Hall building could be sold to generate revenue.

Operational efficiency

During the 2014-15 financial year, utilisation at Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court was approximately 30% of its capacity.

"It is stated that the overall utilisation is 30%. Whilst those responding do not have full access to the statistics and how those figures are calculated, it is clear this includes the Criminal Magistrates' Courts as well as family, housing and civil. The District Judge Hearing room is stated to be at 80% utilisation." (Professional user)

"There is a perception that Criminal work has been moved away from Scunthorpe by the MOJ to other courts and it is this strategy, whether deliberately in preparation for this consultation or not, that has led to the claim that the criminal courts in Scunthorpe are under utilised." (Professional user)

Utilisation figures are calculated using 2014-15 sitting hours workload data from the HM Courts & Tribunals Service performance database for crown, magistrates' and county courts sharing a total of hearing room capacity. Capacity is based on an assumption of 248 sitting days per year and five hours sitting per day for each room. As stated in the consultation document, the utilisation of the court is very low at approximately 30%.

We need to respect the traditions of our court system, yet court attendance is time consuming and often an inefficient process for everyone involved. A more proportionate approach to court attendance would eliminate wasted time and enhance confidence in the administration of justice.

Nationally there is an acceptance that there are low volumes of certain case types and to overcome this it is a common occurrence for lists to be amalgamated across clusters to ensure maximum efficiency.

Alternative provisions of service

There were some responses which made reference to alternative provisions.

"Travel to Doncaster and Hull from some parts of North Lincolnshire would be less difficult than to Grimsby. It is also easier to travel to Hull than to Grimsby or Doncaster from some parts of North Lincolnshire." (Professional user)

"It would be highly desirable for parties, their representatives and witnesses in proceedings to be able to appear by video link from suitable premises in Scunthorpe." (Professional user)

"The use of video link requires significant wider thinking – when this has been considered previously, in the main only the prison, police and probation have been able to access or co-ordinate this. Treatment providers and other agencies would not have the same access rights." (Professional user)

"The freehold building can be vacated and sold by moving the administration function into the main court building (which is on a peppercorn rent)." (Staff member)

“...I would suggest keeping the court open, but only sit on 3 days per week; the case load can then be combined into these 3 days.” (Staff member)

Consideration will be given to how the work can be allocated in relation to the geographical split and to ensure that access to justice is maintained, including in more rural locations.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service will consider some work being listed in both Doncaster and Hull.

We already have well established alternative ways that users can interact with our services. There are examples of this; enabling police officers to give evidence over a live link; processes to enable victims, witnesses and defendants to attend hearings over video link; and users in some jurisdictions have cases progressed or considered through telephone hearings or no papers meaning that they do not need to attend a hearing in person. We are taking a staged approach to the development of our technology requirements.

Housing possession cases/lists were raised as an issue by both professional users and the judiciary in the Humber group of courts, specifically regarding the duty scheme and on the day advice available to users and concerns arising from alternative provision proposals. HM Courts & Tribunals Service will work with both the judiciary and local solicitors to ensure that these issues can be overcome.

Other factors raised

“As far as we are concerned it would add around £50 to the cost of each attendance at court and also reduce our capacity to provide advice to the public as staff will be occupied for nearly 2 hours additional travelling time for each attendance.” (Professional user)

“DRR assessments - if the court closes this will incur a cost per day to the service. Staff time lost to travelling is also a factor.” (Professional user)

“A real positive for treatment services is being co-located within walking distance of police, courts and service to ensure multi-agency wraparound and response.” (Professional user)

We accept that any proposed changes are likely to have an impact on other service providers and we are committed to working with them in order that mutually agreeable solutions are reached.

“At Scunthorpe Court, our partnership has run a Respect Court, an informal Court run to provide young people and children on the cusp of offending with a court based experience. The Respect Court is highly regarded by families whose children have been the subject of this intervention, agencies such as the Youth Offending Team, North Lincolnshire Unitary Authority, local Magistrates and Judiciary, the Police etc.” (Criminal justice partner)

The ‘Respect Court’ initiative and the successful outcomes form an important part of the Scunthorpe community and HM Courts & Tribunals Service will work with members to ensure the continuation of the project.

“Lack of attendance of witnesses is likely to lead to more cracked trials and consequent decreased efficiency for the justice system.” (Magistrate)

“The professional judgment from a number of agencies is that the additional effort to get to court will mean that the number of fail to appear warrant will inevitably increase. This clearly puts additional pressure on Police resources.” (Criminal justice partner)

HM Courts & Tribunals Service has considered the impacts of proposals on stakeholders and justice partners as part of the decision making process. We will continue to work closely with the aforementioned during implementation.

“Another significant difficulty presents to people who need to make an urgent application. If a fee is payable this means a visit to the counter is required unless the delay from making a postal application is acceptable. We would expect the counter service at Grimsby to have extended opening hours – at least until 3pm – to accommodate this.” (Professional user)

“Any ideas that suggest video conferencing or online sentencing is the way forward ignore the government’s woeful experiences with IT.” (Member of the public)

Courts can be contacted during the hours of 9am and 5pm, prior arrangement can be made by phoning the court and advising that an urgent application is to be issued and this should be sufficient to allow this to happen outside of counter opening times. HM Courts & Tribunals Service also operates an out of hours urgent court business scheme.

One response referred to the Lincolnshire Lakes development and the likely upturn of residents. Although in its early stages, outline planning permission of the development of approx 3,000 homes has been approved. As mentioned previously, only a very small number of the population will ever come into contact with the justice system and HM Courts & Tribunals Service regularly reviews trends in workloads across all jurisdictions and the proposals included in the consultation are based on current and projected workloads. Any exceptional changes to workload would be handled through flexible use of the court capacity at that time.

There were also general responses highlighting personal impacts for individuals who include staff, magistrates and judiciary. These will need to be addressed through specific one to one meetings where HM Courts & Tribunals Service will work with individuals to identify what, if any, appropriate reasonable adjustments are required.

Decision

All the points raised by respondents to the consultation have been analysed and following careful consideration, the Lord Chancellor has decided to close Scunthorpe Magistrates’ Court, County Court and Family Court and move the workload to both Grimsby Magistrates’ Court and Grimsby Combined Court.

Implementation

Consultation with the Departmental Trade Union on staffing impacts will take place over the coming months. There are a number of factors to consider before Scunthorpe Magistrates' and County Court can close. Attached with this document is an indicative timetable for implementation. Please note this timetable is subject to change as the programme progresses.

Wakefield Magistrates' Court

The Lord Chancellor has decided that Wakefield Magistrates' Court should be closed and its work moved to Leeds Magistrates' Court.

A total of 30 responses were received which related to Wakefield Magistrates' Court. Of these:

- eight were from members of the public
- eight were from other public sector bodies
- four were from magistrates
- three were from criminal justice partners
- three were from Members of Parliament
- one was from a member of the judiciary
- one was from a member of staff
- one was from a professional court user
- one was from a union or staff group
- A petition was submitted by the Member of Parliament for Wakefield signed by 165 residents of the Wakefield constituency

Of these responses four were in favour of the proposals, one was neutral whilst 25 were opposed.

Access to justice

Wakefield Magistrates' Court is located in Wakefield town centre and is approximately 12 miles from the proposed receiving court; Leeds Magistrates' Court.

The majority of responses made reference to access to justice.

“The travel times on the Consultation Paper do not take account of the distance from Leeds Magistrates' Court to Leeds train and bus stations.” (Member of Parliament)

“Public transport to Leeds from many parts of Wakefield district is difficult, especially for those with mobility problems and very time consuming. For those travelling by car, parking is expensive and the main car parks are some distance from the courts.” (Professional user)

Whilst HM Courts & Tribunals Service acknowledge and accept that some people will need to travel further to reach their nearest court and for some the journey, if made by public transport, may be over an hour, for the majority of people the closure will have little

impact. We are mindful of the infrequency with which people need to attend court and the small proportion of people that would use public transport to reach court.

Users should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend hearings, but we also know that, in an increasingly digital age, users do not always need to attend hearings in person in order to access the justice system. To ensure that access to justice is maintained, including in more rural areas, we are committed to providing alternative ways for users to access our services, including, where appropriate, the use of other civic buildings.

Buses run regularly from Pontefract bus station, an adult day ticket which allows travel anywhere in West Yorkshire costs £4.70.

There are car parks situated in Leeds City Centre and on the outskirts of the city centre. Leeds offers a park and ride service from Elland Road and buses run every 10 minutes to the city centre. A day return ticket costs £3.00.

The cost of travel for victims and witnesses can be claimed subject to regulations. Likewise if a defendant was acquitted following a hearing then travel costs can be claimed subject to similar regulations.

“If Magistrates are still required then it is likely that their travelling expenses will increase significantly.” (Judiciary)

The impact assessment notes that the overall impact on the judiciary has not been monetised, in part because whilst some journeys may take longer, there will be fewer journeys to a consolidated hearing estate. For example, the need to attend hearings at five sites on the region instead of 10. Any increase in travelling expenses would not outweigh the reduction in running costs and the benefits of a more efficient and flexible justice system.

Value for money

The operating costs for Wakefield Magistrates' Court for 2014-15 were £271,000. Wakefield is a listed building and the facilities are sub-standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users. Wakefield Magistrates' Court would require significant investment to bring it up to the required standard.

Some responses made reference to value for money.

“The building in itself is far from fit for purpose and no doubt in terms of maintenance and future development, would not be financially viable. In balance from an organisational perspective there would be agreement for the proposal.” (Professional user)

There is an acceptance that Wakefield Magistrates' Court building is not fit for purpose, however Leeds Magistrates' Court offers excellent quality facilities for users in a modern purpose built building for court users. The close proximity of the receiving court, its size, condition and underuse requires consideration.

“We do not accept that the running costs claimed are going to be saved by the proposed closure.” (Professional user)

There will be savings in the operating costs of running the building such as cleaning, security and waste, as well as fuel and other utilities.

“With regard to asset sales, previous attempts to dispose of court estate in the area have a dismal record.” (Wakefield and Pontefract bench)

The last round of reform; Court Estates Reform Programme, (CERP) throughout the North East region has shown that all buildings; with the exception of two which are currently under negotiation, have either been sold, handed back to the landlord at the end of the lease or are long leaseholds (999 years) which were surrendered back to the appropriate authorities.

Operational efficiency

Two responses accepted the utilisation figures for Wakefield as set out in the consultation document.

“Court utilisation at Wakefield is good, as the consultation paper acknowledges.” (Member of the judiciary)

“It is accepted that in the consultation document that Wakefield Magistrates’ Court is currently well used. It must therefore be a better option to improve the facilities it already has.” (Professional user)

Although Wakefield Magistrates’ Court was utilised for approximately 56% of its capacity during the 2014-15 financial year this alone does not justify keeping the court open when the receiving court can absorb the workload without any enabling works. Combining the workload to one location would improve efficiency and enable savings to be made.

“Owing to the presence of the West Yorkshire Police Headquarters in Wakefield City Centre, West Yorkshire Police use Wakefield Magistrates’ Court on a daily basis. Since 2003, all Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) applications have been issued and determined in Wakefield.” (Professional user)

An important aspect of reform is to strengthen our working relationships with our justice partners, including the police, the National Probation Service and the wider National Offender Management Service as well as the Crown Prosecution Service. We also need to move towards an estate with buildings which are larger and facilitate the more efficient and flexible listing of court and tribunal business whilst also giving users more certainty when their cases will be heard.

Alternative provision of services

A number of responses made comments on the supply of alternative provisions.

“Pontefract Court Buildings are still vacant. They were purpose built for court services and in practice until a few years ago. There are five courtrooms available at Pontefract and could be increased with little adjustment.” (Professional user)

Whilst we are aware that the old Pontefract Magistrates’ Court site is still vacant it does not fulfil the requirements of modern day court users. Pontefract Magistrates’ Court does not have any holding cells and therefore used to rely on the police cells adjacent to the court. The facility previously provided by the police is no longer available since its closure

in the summer of 2014 when they relocated to a new site in Normanton. We also need to reduce the reliance on buildings with poor facilities and to remove from the estate buildings that are difficult and expensive either to improve or to upgrade.

“Observations by Family Court Magistrates are that on any one day there are three or more unused courtrooms at Wakefield Civil Justice Centre (WCJC) and to employ these for criminal work would both increase its usage and reduce the case-cost to HMCTS.” (Wakefield and Pontefract Bench)

We acknowledge that there is some capacity at Wakefield Civil Justice Centre and will actively look to list local cases where appropriate. However, there are constraints to consider such as the lack of cell accommodation and the need to take into consideration the appropriate mix of court users from different disciplines who may attend court on any given day.

“The use of technology and video conferencing could be extremely useful and would be welcomed. This would not only allow a local link to the delivery of justice but would also aid with efficiencies.” (Professional user)

There are provisions in place to enable some categories of victims and witnesses (such as children, vulnerable adults and victims of sexual assault) to give evidence behind screens, in private or by video link without having to come to court. We are looking to expand these provisions to include all witnesses and to provide more choice than is currently available.

Other considerations

“Far too many services and businesses have moved to Leeds and elsewhere in recent years, diminishing the city centre and making it harder still for remaining businesses to prosper.” (Professional user)

“Impact on the Wakefield District economy should be considered as the loss of the District’s only remaining magistrates’ court has the potential to impact legal professions in Wakefield.” (Judiciary)

HM Courts & Tribunals Service accepts that the closure of the court may impact some people more than others, including those with local businesses, however, we must have due regard to ensure our estate is used to deliver justice efficiently and effectively whilst providing value for money.

For small businesses, including solicitors, there may be a small increase in time and travel costs due to the additional travel necessary to conduct business at the nearest court. However, some or all of this could be offset by fewer journeys to court due to cases being listed more flexibly and efficiently.

“The Youth Offending Team have a number of specific programmes for offenders that are judged to be very successful but these are local to the Wakefield area and are not available in Leeds; this service would be lost if Wakefield closes.” (Judiciary)

The success of the ‘Magistrates in the Community’ programme and the programme currently run by the Youth Offending Team form an important part of the Wakefield community and HM Courts & Tribunals Service will work with members to ensure continuation of the projects.

“The proposal will have a negative impact on other agencies including Probation and the Police.”(Professional user)

Part of the decision making process has been to consider the impacts of proposals on our stakeholders and justice partners. We will continue to work closely with both of the aforementioned during implementation to ensure that we manage the impacts of any closures.

Decision

All the points raised by respondents to the consultation have been analysed and following careful consideration, the Lord Chancellor has decided to close Wakefield Magistrates' Court and move its work to work Leeds Magistrates' Court.

Implementation

Consultation with the Departmental Trade Union on staffing impacts will take place over the coming months. There are a number of factors to consider before Wakefield Magistrates' Court can close. Attached with this document is an indicative timetable for implementation. Please note this timetable is subject to change as the programme progresses.

Consultation principles

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

Annex A – List of respondents

In addition to the 39 members of the public who responded to the consultation, the following named individuals and organisations provided a response:

Ackworth Parish Council	Councillor for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Alderson Law LLP	Councillors of Hartlepool
Andrea Jenkyns, Member of Parliament for Morley and Outwood	Deputy Head of the National Probation Service North East
Anne-Marie Trevelyan, Member for Parliament for Berwick-upon-Tweed	District Judge Atherton
Bench Chairman Rotherham Law Courts	District Judge Gardner
Bishop of Durham	District Judge Good
Bond Dickinson LLP	District Judge Lower
Citizens Advice Bureau	District Judge Stephenson, Scunthorpe and Grimsby Court Centres
Calderdale Council	District Judge Underwood, on behalf of Bradford District Judges
Calderdale Local Authority	Durham Magistrates Bench
Castleford Community Partnership	Finn Gledhill Solicitors
Chair of Calderdale Magistrates' Bench	Four Housing
Chair of Northumbria Family Panel	GEOAmeY Prisoner Escort Custody Service UK Ltd
Chair of South Yorkshire Resolution	Grimsby and Scunthorpe Rape Crisis Ltd
North Lincolnshire Magistrates Bench Chairman	Halifax and Huddersfield Junior Lawyer Division of the Law Society
Chairman County Durham & Darlington LJA	Halifax and Huddersfield Junior Lawyers
Chairman, Hartlepool local Justice Area	Hartlepool Council
Chief Executive Hartlepool Council	Hartlepool Local Justice Area
Chief Superintendent Harwin, Rotherham District Commander, South Yorkshire Police	Hartlepool Magistrates Bench

HH Judge Gosnell, Designated Civil Judge for Leeds, North Yorkshire and the Bradford Group of Courts	Judge Lee, Regional Employment Judge, Yorkshire & Humber Region
HH Judge Hillier, Designated Family Judge for West Yorkshire Family Court Coverdale House, Leeds	Judge Males, on behalf of the Presiding Judges and the FDLJ of the Northern Eastern Circuit.
HH Judge Hudson, Designated Family Judge for Northumbria and North Durham	Leaders of West Yorkshire and York local authorities
HH Judge Richardson QC, on behalf of Judiciary in the Humber group of courts	Legal Services Manager, Northumberland County Council
HH Judge Robinson, Designated Civil Judge for Sheffield and South Yorkshire	Local Justice of the Peace
HMCTS Staff Members	Local practicing Barristers
Holly Lynch, Member of Parliament for Halifax	Magistrates Association
Humberside Criminal Justice Board	Mary Creagh, Member of Parliament for Wakefield
Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company (HLNY CRC)	Newcastle Citizens Advice Bureaux
Ian Wright, Member of Parliament for Hartlepool	Newcastle Employment Tribunal Judiciary
Income Manager, Pennine Housing 2000 LTD	Newcastle upon Tyne Law Society
Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service	NHS England Health & Justice, Cumbria and the North East
Jon Trickett, Member of Parliament for Hemsworth	Nic Dakin, Member of Parliament for Scunthorpe
Judge Ashton-Smith, Tribunal Judge	Normanton Town Council
Judge Findlay, Regional Tribunal Judge	North Lincolnshire Magistrates Bench Chairman
Judge Heatherington, Tribunal Judge	North Lincolnshire Council
Judge Hindmarsh on behalf of Tribunal Judges, First tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Residential Property (RPT)	North Lincolnshire Magistrates Bench
Judge Jefferson, Residential Property Tribunal	North Northumbria Magistrates association
	Northumberland County Council
	Northumberland County Council's Child Care Legal Team
	Northumbria Citizens Advice Bureaux

Northumbrian Water Ltd	The Grove Community and Residents Association
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner West Yorkshire	UK Association of Part Time Judges
Oxley & Coward Solicitors LLP	Wakefield and Pontefract Magistrates Bench
Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)	Wakefield Civic Society
Pennine Housing 2000 LTD	Wakefield Youth Offending Team
Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland	Wilkinson Woodward Beadders Solicitors
Police & Crime Commissioner for Humberside	Yorkshire Probation Service
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire	Yvette Cooper, Member of Parliament for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford
Police Officer, Humberside Police	
Pontefract Town Centre Partnership	
Presiding Judges and FDLJ of the North Eastern Circuit	
Ramsdens Solicitors	
Rotherham Borough Council (Legal and Democratic Services)	
Sarah Champion, Member of Parliament for Rotherham	
Scunthorpe Citizens Advice Bureaux	
Sharlston Parish Council	
Short Break & Parent Participation Officer, Hartlepool	
Smith & Graham Solicitors	
Solicitors who practice within Scunthorpe	
South Yorkshire Resolution	
Superintendent Houchin, Chair of the North Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership	

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