

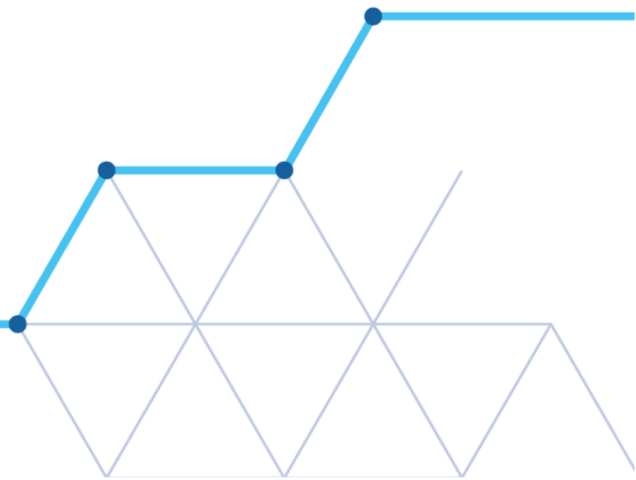


Ministry
of Justice

Areas of Research Interest

May 2018

Protecting and advancing the principles of justice





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Foreword

The Ministry of Justice is fortunate to be able to draw on a wide range of high quality evidence, produced by both internal specialists and external experts. Good data and research evidence underpin effective policy making.

We value the important and insightful work conducted by the academic and wider research community, and the role it plays in our knowledge base. We very much appreciate the external funding of justice research. Internally at the Ministry of Justice, social researchers, operational researchers, economists, data scientists and statisticians all support, challenge and advise policy and operational colleagues and ministers.

The Ministry of Justice would like to build on the wealth of evidence available and, through this publication, highlight the areas where we would like to improve our knowledge. There is a huge appetite within the ministry for even more and even better analysis. We want to be transparent as to where our evidence gaps lie. Through continually improving and expanding our knowledge, we will provide better evidence on which to make good policy choices, and enhance the monitoring and evaluation of progress and how we demonstrate outcomes.

Determining our strategic research needs and making these accessible supports a recommendation from the 2015 Nurse Review of UK Research Councils. Sir Paul Nurse's review recommended developing a more systematic expression of the government's research requirements. Sir Paul stated that this should partly be a matter of securing the right levels of resource, but also creating 'statements of need' through identifying the most important research questions confronting departments. We are pleased to be joining other departments in publishing areas of research interest.

We are keen to work in partnership to strengthen our strategic evidence base. We want to maintain and build on existing networks with external research communities and funders working in all areas of justice. We would like to develop new networks. We will also work collaboratively with other departments who have mutual areas of research interests to us, to ensure we are developing our evidence in an integrated and co-ordinated way.

Being transparent about our areas of research interest will, we hope, contribute to filling the knowledge gaps set out in this publication. Some of the strategic evidence needs set out here have been long-established, others are new. No doubt additional evidence needs will emerge. We are therefore committed to publishing updated areas of research interest for the Ministry of Justice.

Alexy Buck and Rachel Dubourg
Chief Social Researchers

Introduction

The Ministry of Justice protects and advances the principles of justice. Our vision is to deliver a world-class justice system that works for everyone in society.

Most people are likely to come into contact with the justice system at some point in their lives: as a witness to or victim of a crime, when protecting and enforcing rights, or while settling disputes. The Ministry of Justice works to protect the public and reduce reoffending, and to provide a more effective, transparent and responsive justice system for victims and the public. We have responsibility for courts, prisons and probation services. We work in partnership with other government departments and agencies to reform the justice system to serve the public and uphold the principles of justice. We are also responsible for making new laws, strengthening democracy, and safeguarding human rights and the rule of law.

The Ministry of Justice conducts an extensive programme of analytical work. It strives to put evidence at the heart of the justice system, using cutting edge tools and techniques, established methodologies, and collaboration. The research and analysis conducted within the ministry is diverse and includes: provision of statistics covering the whole of the justice system; analysis of newly linked data; data visualisation, advanced analytics and data engineering; forecasting of demand; impact assessments; financial modelling; collection, analysis and reporting of operational management information; and the conduct of research reviews and primary social research. A Data, Evidence and Science Board brings together recognised external experts to advise on our work, guide our progress and get involved in the areas relevant to each board member's expertise.

The department today builds on a long and proud history of justice research being conducted, commissioned and published by government. The very first dedicated social research unit within government was established in 1957, in response to the newly appointed Conservative Home Secretary R.A. Butler being struck by the lack of information to enable him to justify expenditure on prisons and penal policy.

In 2018, the purpose of this document is to identify publicly the Ministry of Justice's strategic evidence gaps. The focus is on long-term and cross-cutting gaps in our understanding. Sir Paul Nurse's review of research councils made clear the need for government departments to communicate clearly about where their long-term research interests lie, to ensure that the UK continues to support world-leading science and invests public money in the best possible way. We hope this document will support ongoing and new engagement with the external community to expand and deepen the department's underpinning evidence base.

The areas of research interest given below are structured around departmental priorities with key research questions under each theme:

- deliver a modern courts and justice system
- create a prison and probation service that reforms offenders
- promote Global Britain and protect the rule of law
- create a transformed department that delivers excellent services

Deliver a modern courts and justice system

What are the key demographic and societal changes most likely to influence future demands on the justice system and how should the justice system respond?

Rapid societal and demographic changes present a challenge to the justice system in being able to respond appropriately. It is important to understand the shifts in the demographic profile of the population and how these may relate to attitudes to justice and the demands on the system. Understanding the changes in demographics such as age, sex, ethnicity, country of origin or religious beliefs will support us in increasing our understanding of how justice should be delivered to accommodate the needs of the population. In all of these areas more evidence would help shape the service we provide.

The digitisation of services will lead to changes in the justice system. For example, while digitisation provides the opportunity to deliver justice more efficiently, the digital age also presents risks, whether through accessibility issues among certain groups, creating new demands on the system (for example cybercrime) or exposing the system to digital attack. Some key questions are:

- How might current and future changes in the demographic profile of the population impact on the justice system?
- How might other future trends in society impact the justice system, for example climate change and technological advances?
- What are the organisational impacts and offender outcomes associated with the use of innovative justice technologies, such as new electronic monitoring approaches and decision-making tools for practitioners?
- How can we ensure all groups are treated fairly and proportionally within the justice system so that they achieve fair and equitable outcomes?
- Which groups face barriers to accessing justice services, including where access is through new digital forms of delivery? How can the justice system effectively support these groups in accessing justice?
- How do we adapt the justice system to effectively and efficiently respond to both changes in technology and types of cases within the justice system?
- How do technological changes affect the purchase of internationally mobile legal services?

How do we drive up court and tribunal performance to deliver efficient and effective justice?

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) reform programme will deliver modern, accessible and fit for purpose services for the 21st century by putting users at the heart of the reforms. This offers an opportunity to improve performance across the system, while also presenting challenges to overcome. A detailed understanding of the expectations and behaviours of users and professionals is key to identifying what the performance issues are and how to improve performance. Some key questions are:

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- What elements of performance do the users of courts and tribunals most value, and what are they willing to sacrifice for extra gains? Are there commonalities across the different jurisdictions?
- What are the key factors that influence court and tribunal performance (for example listing practices, behaviours/actions of users, Crown Prosecution Service, defence or other actors)? How do these vary by case type and court/tribunal?
- How do we incentivise behaviours among professionals and users to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and to innovate?
- Where and how should efforts be focused to improve performance across the system? What is the best way of facilitating learning and best practice to improve performance across the system?
- What are the opportunities and potential risks provided by digitising of services for efficiency? How do we encourage users and professionals to engage with digital services?
- What are the overlaps between different branches of law? To what extent do people engage with more than one (for example young people in care proceedings and the youth justice system; victims of domestic violence using criminal and civil proceedings; women in family law proceedings and the criminal justice system)? Is there potential to use this knowledge to streamline court processes and make their experience better?

How do we improve trust in justice, and what is the relationship with how the justice system is used?

Trust and confidence in, and an understanding of the purpose of the justice system, are important in facilitating access to justice. Trust and confidence is key to encouraging victims and witnesses to report crimes to the police and take part in criminal proceedings. Trust is also key in enabling people to make informed decisions about when it is appropriate to use the formal civil, family and administrative justice systems and encouraging compliance with court decisions. We are seeking to increase our knowledge on a range of issues including to what extent victims and witnesses have confidence in the criminal justice system. Increasing our understanding of what measures improve users' experience of and confidence in the system, regardless of case outcomes, will support future developments. Some key questions are:

- What measures and/or experiences foster or improve trust, and what reduces it?
- What is the relationship between trust and confidence in the procedural fairness of the criminal/youth justice system and the impact on defendants' and offenders' behaviour such as plea behaviour and compliance with sentences?
- To what extent do those using the family, civil and administrative justice systems have trust and confidence that the system will deliver just outcomes? What factors influence levels of trust?
- What are the drivers for non-compliance with legal decisions, and how can compliance be effectively facilitated and encouraged?

How do we best support victims in getting access to justice?

Some users of the justice system may be particularly at risk of having difficulties in accessing justice or in navigating the system, and the practices of the system may present specific challenges to them, for example giving evidence in a court. Children, victims of domestic abuse, victims of sexual offences or exploitation, victims of modern slavery, and those with mental health problems or learning disabilities are groups of particular concern to the department. There is an established research base looking at the experiences of victims of domestic abuse more broadly, but there is less evidence on what works in effectively supporting them within the justice system. Similarly, in terms of mental health or learning disabilities the evidence base is limited regarding how these may impact on someone's ability to access justice. Some key questions are:

- What are the most effective interventions to support victims in coping and recovering from crime? How does this vary by different types of victim?
- What measures help facilitate access to justice for vulnerable users, particularly children, victims of domestic abuse and those with mental health needs or learning disabilities?
- What interventions are most effective in supporting and protecting children, victims of domestic abuse and those with mental health needs or learning disabilities while they are going through the justice system?
- What civil and criminal remedies are most effective in supporting victims of domestic abuse in achieving their goals, and in preventing reoffending by the perpetrator?

What do criminal courts need to do to promote positive perceptions of the justice system?

Research¹ suggests that people's perceptions of fair procedures within the criminal justice system are important in forming their views of, and compliance with, justice processes. Increasing our knowledge of the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of users of the system can ensure we have an understanding about how services are delivered and the impact this has on the perceptions of those involved in the criminal justice system. Some key questions are:

- How effective is the system in supporting victims and witnesses in giving quality evidence, maintaining dignity, understanding decisions and sentences, and coping with and recovering from their experience? What pre-court and court measures are most effective?
- To what extent is sentencing aligned with public attitudes and expectations, and do shifts in sentencing policy have potential to impact on public attitudes?

¹ Jansson K. 2015, 'Public confidence in the Criminal Justice System – findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2013/14)', 2015. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/449444/public-confidence.pdf
 Latest statistics from Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW). Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/perceptionscriminaljusticesystemcsewopendatable>

What mechanisms are most effective in supporting people/organisations in addressing problems before they escalate or without the need to use courts/tribunals?

Although the clear majority of disputes settle before court, understanding why others escalate to the point of requiring resolution by the court and tribunal system may help identify opportunities to apply earlier interventions across the jurisdictions. Diverting more people, where it is appropriate to do so, to forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) has potential to deliver efficiencies, swifter justice and high levels of user satisfaction. At the same time, we recognise that not all disputes are suitable for ADR and we need to make sure it is well targeted and leads to just and sustainable settlements. Some key questions are:

- How do we best support users to resolve disputes themselves, while providing appropriate access to the courts and tribunals? Why are some people unwilling to engage with early dispute resolution?
- What are the attitudes towards ADR of those with civil, family or administrative problems? What are the attitudes of the wider public, as well as key stakeholders such as employers and government departments to ADR? Is there confidence in these measures delivering justice?
- What are the characteristics of complaint or internal resolution procedures that are most effective in organisations/businesses in early resolution of civil or administrative disputes?
- How can we encourage learning among organisations/businesses to prevent avoidable disputes arising in the future?
- What impact does legal capability have on the ability to understand rights and resolve justice problems?
- What role can public legal education have in supporting citizens with legal needs?
- What role does technology and the internet play in delivering an effective, proportionate and accessible formal justice system?
- What are the upstream drivers of demand on the formal justice system and how do we incentivise other departments and agencies to work together to provide whole system interventions?
- What outcomes do ADR settlements lead to, relative to court adjudication, in terms of cost, time and quality of justice? How do these differ by type and value of dispute and characteristics of the parties involved?
- What incentives and behavioural levers are more effective in encouraging the use of ADR?
- How (cost)-effective are ADR measures, in particular mediation in family disputes?
- What family or parental characteristics indicate there may be difficulties in reaching amicable decisions regarding children and finances on separation? Are these families equipped to deal with conflicts by themselves, and if not, what mechanisms can help resolve conflict to secure agreement?

What approaches deliver effective and efficient justice, resulting in positive sustainable outcomes?

Effective and efficient courts and tribunals are essential for the swift and proportionate delivery of justice and to promote confidence in the justice system and the rule of law. We know that adopting a particular problem-solving strategy greatly increases the likelihood of adopting the same strategy again and again for subsequent problems, so early intervention and advice may help individuals with multiple or repeated legal problems develop skills to resolve their disputes. In the public family law system, we know that 1 in 4 birth mothers return through the courts with another child within 7 years.² This highlights the need for better understanding of early intervention and post-court support. Some key questions are:

- How effective is the system in supporting applicants, respondents and defendants in giving quality evidence, maintaining dignity, understanding and complying with decisions and coping with their experience? What measures are most effective?
- How do we reduce incidence of individuals repeatedly using the civil and family court system for the same or multiple issues? What drives repeat use, for example poor initial decisions, lack of compliance, poor understanding of outcomes or not equipping users with skills to resolve further disputes?
- How effective is the pre-sentence report process in providing timely advice to sentencers? Does the process capture all relevant information – for example on maturity, mental health issues or learning disabilities, dependants or experiences of domestic abuse?
- How effective are different orders in public family law and private family law cases in delivering positive and sustainable outcomes for children and their families? What factors account for this, and are there lessons to suggest different orders lead to more positive outcomes in different circumstances?
- What interventions are effective in supporting compliance with family, civil and administrative justice rulings?
- How is breach of a community order dealt with by the courts and how does this differ to suspended sentence orders?
- How do the courts support our objective to foster innovation and ensure our law, courts and legal services remain a primary choice for businesses across the world?

How do we balance the costs of the justice system and sources of revenue in an optimal way to promote access to justice?

The court and tribunal system costs £1.9 billion per year. It is funded through a combination of court fees paid by users, revenue from fines and other criminal impositions, transfers from other government departments and by funding from HM Treasury. The provision of legal help and advice is also supported through the provision of legal aid. In recent years there have been changes to the court and tribunal fee structures and the availability of legal aid. Exploring the extent to which costs, such as court fees or legal fees, influence demand on the formal justice system and how people seek to resolve issues is vital to help us identify how future changes may impact on behaviours.

² Broadhurst K and others, 'Vulnerable birth mothers and recurrent care proceedings: Final summary report', Nuffield Foundation, 2017

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Assessing where costs can be reduced, and other forms of revenue maximised, for example through compliance in paying fines, is also of interest. Some key questions are:

- How do the costs of justice (for example court fees, legal fees) influence the behaviours of those with justice needs and decisions regarding resolution strategies?
- How effective is early advice and dispute resolution in terms of time, costs and quality of outcomes? What are the downstream impacts on the justice system and wider society?
- How can we best support litigants in person and unrepresented defendants to successfully navigate the justice system?
- Why do some people do nothing about or choose not to pursue legal problems and what are the impacts of inaction?
- What types of legal help and support are most effective and how do we facilitate and incentivise their provision?
- What methods can be used to enforce judgements in the most effective, proportionate and cost-efficient ways?

Create a prison and probation service that reforms offenders

How do we reduce the number of young people offending and entering the youth justice system?

A recently published Ministry of Justice international review³ outlines approaches that can be effective in managing young people in the youth justice system. While the evidence base is growing, most of the high quality published studies are international. Therefore, there is a lack of robust evidence on what works for whom at the various stages in our youth justice system. Comparable information on cost-effective interventions is also limited. Good evidence is available on the predictors of the onset of criminal behaviour.⁴ However, it is less complete on the drivers of and protective factors associated with continued offending and transition from the youth to adult justice systems. The available administrative data can be more limited for young offenders, especially when compared to adult offenders. Therefore, there are evidence gaps, for example on young people's offending-related needs, which in turn limits our understanding of the nature of the current cohort. With recent falls in the number of first-time entrants to the justice system⁵ we need to better understand what is required to meet offenders' rehabilitation needs and to reduce reoffending. In addition, there is a paucity of representative information on wider (non-reoffending) resettlement outcomes for those released from custody. Some key questions are:

- Which interventions are most effective in preventing 'at risk' children and young people from offending?
- Which interventions are effective in reducing reoffending (and improving other outcomes such as education; training and employment; health and accommodation) for children and young people at various stages of the youth justice system?
- What works to increase compliance among children and young people with the various youth justice disposals and supervision?
- What type of interventions reduce reoffending among children and young people who are being supervised in the community or in custody?
- What are the outcomes for children and young people post-release from custody (for example education, training and employment, health and accommodation)?
- What are the factors predicting transition into the adult criminal justice system and do these vary by ethnicity or gender?

³ Adler JA and others, 'What works in managing young people who offend: a summary of the international evidence base', Ministry of Justice, 2016

⁴ See for example, Farrington DP and Welsh BB, 'Saving Children from a life of crime: early risk factors and effective interventions', 2008

⁵ Sutherland A and others, 'Analysis of trends in first time entrants to the youth justice system', Ministry of Justice, 2017

Does diversion to alternative disposals work and for whom?

The criminal court and youth justice system delivers justice through the decision making of magistrates, judges and other key stakeholders. It is a complex and expensive system to run. Diverting more offenders, where it is appropriate to do so, to alternative disposals or support has potential to deliver efficiencies, swifter justice and better outcomes. This includes triage, health and liaison to divert low level youth offenders and/or those with health issues away from the formal justice system to more appropriate support. For the wider offender population, initiatives include Restorative Justice and Community Resolutions. Some key questions are:

- How effective are different interventions aimed at dealing with the underlying causes of offending? At what point in the justice process or pre-justice process are they most effective? Who are they most effective for? What is the best approach to commissioning and delivering these interventions?
- How effective are alternative disposals and diversionary methods in reducing subsequent offending? How does this vary across offence and offender type, and how can we make sure diversion is targeted where most effective? Where do costs and benefits fall?
- What incentives and behavioural levers are more effective in encouraging the use of alternative disposals and diversionary methods among front line stakeholders?
- What are the attitudes of victims, witnesses and the wider public, as well as key partner organisations such as the police and judiciary, towards alternative disposals, diversionary methods and community supervision? Is there confidence in these measures delivering justice?

What interventions are most cost-effective in reducing adult reoffending, and what works for whom?

There is good evidence on what factors are associated with reoffending⁶ – for example, impulsivity and poor self-regulation, drug misuse, lack of employment or lack of stable accommodation. However, our understanding of what works to reduce reoffending tends to be high level, with less understanding of what approaches might work best with different types of offender. In terms of sanctions, there are, for example, questions about the optimal approach to rehabilitating vulnerable offenders. In terms of interventions, there is good evidence on some (for example drug misuse) but for others there are gaps (for example accommodation). Evidence on the costs and benefits of interventions (and on which part of the system the costs and benefits fall) is also lacking, as is a more in-depth understanding of what works with whom, and how. Better quality evidence in this area would help to improve practice and design more effective interventions for offenders, be they delivered in a custodial or community setting. Some key questions are:

- Building on what we know on how to best rehabilitate offenders, are certain sanctions more appropriate for some offenders than others, and how do we create the right conditions in custody and community for this rehabilitation? What is the best way to rehabilitate vulnerable offenders – for example those with mental health problems or learning disabilities, or those who have experienced domestic abuse?

⁶ See for example, 'Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending', Ministry of Justice, 2014

- What role does the workforce have in achieving effective rehabilitation? How can we develop a rehabilitative culture across the prison and probation workforce?
- How can local services be best engaged to support and sustain desistance during the sentence and beyond? How can providers of services collaborate and work in partnership with prisons and probation to support offenders?
- Which sectors and types of employment are most likely to provide sustainable employment for ex-offenders? Which incentives are most effective at encouraging employers to engage with and hire ex-offenders?
- At what point of an offenders' journey through the criminal justice system can we best intervene to support their rehabilitation?
- What is the relationship between different sentences (custodial versus community, length of sentence, and delivery of sentence such as use of electronic tags) and reducing reoffending or promoting positive outcomes (for example reduced drug use)? What factors account for the relationship, and are there lessons to suggest different sentences are more effective in reducing reoffending in different circumstances?
- Do some interventions work better with certain individuals? What are the wider outcomes of interventions, for example impact on education, training and employment, accommodation or substance misuse? What is the relative cost-effectiveness of different interventions?
- How effective is increased access to sport and physical activities in achieving wider objectives such as improving the health, wellbeing and self-esteem of offenders?
- How can we best target interventions at specific subgroups within the offender population or identify gaps in the provision for specific sub-groups (for example, short-sentenced prisoners, acquisitive offenders, gang-related offenders, female offenders, those with mental health problems or extremist offenders)?
- What works to increase compliance among offenders with their court orders and licence conditions?
- Which non-accredited interventions are effective in reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?
- How effective are new forms of technology in engaging service users and supporting their desistance (for example, electronic monitoring and in-cell technology)?
- In what ways, how and why is sentencing behaviour influenced by increasing sentence lengths and extra-legal factors?
- What are the links between the different operating models implemented by prison and probation providers and key outcomes for service users? How effective are community hubs in helping engage probation service users and supporting their desistance?

How do we best create custodial and community based environments that keep people safe and reduce levels of violence and self-harm?

Improving and sustaining safety in prisons is a high and urgent priority for the department. Providing a safer environment for those in prison and returning people to the community in a better condition than on their entry to custody is an essential role of the prison service. We have reasonable information on levels of violence and self-harm within prisons as well as some of the risk factors (for example, assaults are strongly associated with younger age prisoners as well as those with low self-control). Existing evidence also shows that

the prison environment, and the relationships within it, play a considerable role in how prisoners behave: for example, physically poor conditions, highly controlling regimes, or circumstances in which rules are unevenly applied or not adhered to, heighten tensions and induce stresses, giving rise to conflict and assault.⁷ Available staff with appropriate skills and minimising the illicit economy in prisons are also important in reducing risk. Further research, particularly involving quantified outcomes, is needed. Some key questions are:

- What approaches are effective in reducing incidents in prison such as assaults, self-harm or drug use?
- What are the drivers of violence and self-harm in custody and how can we better predict emerging risks? How does this vary by prison type and offender groups?
- What are effective ways of stopping illicit items entering custody?

⁷ See for example: Bierie DM, 'Is tougher better? The impact of physical prison conditions on inmate violence', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*: volume 56, pages 338–355, 2012; Day JC and others, 'Coercion and social support behind bars: testing an integrated theory of misconduct and resistance in U.S. prisons', *Criminal Justice and Behavior*: volume 42, pages 133–155, 2015; Griffin ML and Hepburn JR 'Inmate misconduct and the institutional capacity for control', *Criminal Justice and Behavior*: volume 40, pages 270–288, 2013

Promote Global Britain and protect the rule of law

UK legal services fuel our economy to the tune of £24 billion per year, with a £4 billion trade surplus – and ours is the international law of choice, with 27% of the world's 320 jurisdictions using English common law. We are keen to foster innovation and ensure our law, courts and legal services remain a primary choice for businesses across the world. We are also interested in increasing our understanding of what underpins individuals' and businesses' decisions on where to litigate to ensure we maintain an effective and predictable cross-border framework for commercial, civil and family disputes. Additionally, as we work to protect and promote the rule of law and human rights, we are interested in the impact of this work and the UK's standing both domestically and overseas. Some key questions are:

- What are the key drivers when individuals and businesses choose to resolve international legal disputes, and purchase internationally mobile legal services, in the UK and use English law to govern their contracts?
- How do we ensure English law, UK legal services and our courts remain a primary choice for international businesses? How can the ongoing reform of HMCTS support this?
- How do we incentivise the growth of a thriving LawTech industry and foster innovation in legal services, backing the UK to compete globally in taking the lead on cutting edge opportunities?
- To what extent does improved rule of law overseas have a direct impact on the interests of UK businesses and directly support bilateral trade and investment? What impact have justice programmes in regions such as the Middle East, China, Eastern Europe and Latin America made in this regard?
- How does our reputation on human rights (as core component of the rule of law) reflect other countries' attitudes towards the UK?

Create a transformed department that delivers excellent services

Where should resources be spent to maximise positive and sustainable outcomes?

Civil, administrative, family and criminal justice can be delivered outside the court/tribunal system (such as through mediation in family disputes and diversion or out of court disposals for offenders), or delivered through the decisions of the court and tribunal system. Offenders serving custodial or community sentences may be offered a range of interventions to address their offending behaviour and other needs. Our understanding of the effectiveness of the options available to achieve just and sustainable outcomes is variable, and where it is stronger the evidence is not always comparable. Thus, we do not always know where we are best to direct limited resources for maximum benefit. In the previous sections, key areas are highlighted for the different branches of law where improving our understanding of effectiveness would be beneficial. To succeed it is important that we have a framework that promotes comparability across studies and facilitates an assessment of relative cost-effectiveness of measures. This needs to be supported by good quality and consistent data throughout the justice system to develop our understanding of where costs occur and benefits accrue. Key questions to deliver this include:

- How do we best promote comparability across the evidence base to assess the effectiveness of different approaches and interventions?
- Where do the costs and benefits of interventions fall?
- How do we ensure access to quality data across all sections of the justice system?

Collaboration and communication

To ensure we maximise the value of the evidence and research we generate and invest in, it is essential that we share it effectively. The department aims to be as transparent as possible about its research to help inform decisions about policy and delivery, and to also play a role in wider policy debate.

In line with the government's commitment to open data, we work on the general presumption that research results and other evidence collected and used during Ministry of Justice business should be made available. There are a range of professional codes of practice to support this.

The department is updating its Data and Evidence Strategy to ensure we continue to take the lead in establishing links with our key audiences and we will also continue to ensure that stakeholders, delivery partners, other interested bodies and the wider public are kept informed of our work.

We will routinely look to engage in collaborative ventures and dialog with partners to ensure our research is aligned with that of the wider research community. We will support and engage with research projects being led by others to ensure findings are incorporated into our evidence base, to avoid duplication and to ensure effective knowledge transfer.

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