



Justice Committee

Mike Freer MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice

By email only

24 January 2023

Dear Mike,

Thank you for coming to give evidence to the Committee on criminal legal aid on 17 January. I wanted to follow up on a number of points raised during the evidence session.

1. During the session you referred to an increase in both practitioners and duty solicitor provision since October last year, would you be able to provide us with the figures that demonstrate this increase? You helpfully referred to some figures on the number of firms and duty solicitors during the session, but it would be useful to be able see this data in context so that the trend over time can be fully examined.
2. Whether the Government has any projections on the number of criminal legal aid firms and the number of practitioners who will be undertaking criminal legal aid work in 2024 and 2025?
3. What are the seven areas in England and Wales, referred to by Daniel Flury, where there are fewer than four duty solicitors?



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4. Daniel Flury said that there had been an increase in the number of ineffective trials due to the absence of prosecution advocates. Could you provide any statistics that are available that shows the number of ineffective trials in the last 12 months due to the lack of a prosecution advocate?
5. Has the department estimated the financial cost of the current level of ineffective trials?
6. The Government's response to the Committee's Court Capacity report, which we published in July 2022, said that the Government was aiming to publish the results of the section 28 review in the autumn. During the evidence session, Daniel Flury said that this review would now be published in the spring, could you set out the reason for the delay?
7. During the session, you mentioned that the department is yet to complete its modelling on whether it will be possible to reduce the number of outstanding cases in the Crown Court to 53,000 by March 2025. Could the Department share its latest modelling for what the level of outstanding cases will be in March 2025?
8. In relation to the court estate, you mentioned that only 1% of sitting days have been lost due to planned or unplanned maintenance. Could you confirm what the relevant figure is for the Crown Court?
9. Which courts will see their facilities upgraded in 2023?
10. What progress is the department making in resolving the problems with resulting and the Common Platform raised by Lord Chief Justice during the evidence session on 8 November?



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11. Finally, in the Government's response to the Court Capacity report, the Government said that the HMCTS court reform programme was on track to be completed by December 2023. Could the department confirm whether this remains the case and provide a breakdown of the projects that are due to be completed by the end of the programme?

I would be grateful for a response to this letter by 9 February 2023.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Robert Neill MP
Chair
Justice Committee