



Justice Committee

Mike Freer MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Ministry of Justice
By email only

20/02/2024

Dear Minister Freer,

As you may be aware, the Justice Committee visited Birmingham on 25 January as part of our inquiry into Probate. We were grateful for the opportunity to meet the team and talk through their plans to improve the service. We gained useful insights to inform our inquiry.

We have some questions following that visit. We'd be grateful for a response to the following:

- Do probate fees cover the overheads of the probate service? Please give details.
- What proportion of staff are agency workers? Is this expected to change?
- Please supply the range of wait times the probate application average statistics includes.
- What documents are you currently unable to accept electronically from a solicitor affirming authenticity?
- What needs to happen to allow electronic copies of documents to be accepted from a solicitor and/or individual applicant?
- What is the cost of the Exela contract and what proportion relates to probate? How many documents are Exela are processing? What type of errors and problems are caused by mistakes at the Exela site?

We look forward to your response. We expect to invite you to give oral evidence after Easter.

Yours Sincerely,

Sir Robert Neill KC (Hon) MP
Chair, Justice Committee