



Justice Committee

The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice

By email only

3 December 2024

Dear Shabana,

DATA AND MODELLING ON SITTING DAYS

On Tuesday 26 November, we held an evidence session with the Lady Chief Justice, Rt Hon the Baroness Carr of Walton-on-the-Hill on her Annual Report for 2023-24. She told us that the Government's decision to limit the Crown Court to 106,500 sitting days in 2024-25 has "had a drastic effect across the board". When the Committee visited Snaresbrook Crown Court in November, we were also told the decision not to allow the Crown Court to sit to capacity meant it was now only able to sit to 75% of capacity. As you know, Snaresbrook Crown Court is the biggest Crown Court in England and Wales and deals with a significant number of cases involving rape and serious sexual offences, which is an area of government priority. Ahead of your appearance before the Committee on 17 December, the Committee would ask that you share the data and modelling produced by the Ministry of Justice and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service to inform the Government's decision to cap sitting days in the Crown Court at 106,500 for 2024/25.

At present there are no official statistics available on the number of outstanding cases in the criminal courts in 2024 because of the cancellation of the Criminal Court Statistics quarterly publication to resolve problems with the data. The absence of this data limits the ability of the Committee to scrutinise the Government's approach to the backlog in the Crown Court. The Committee would like to know, in the absence of this data, what information was used by the Ministry of Justice to make the decision to cap sitting days at 106,500 for 2024/25. The Committee would ask that the Ministry provides:

- The modelling that was used to show the effect of limiting the number of sitting days to 106,500 on the number of outstanding cases in the Crown Court in 2025;
- The information used on the current number of outstanding cases in the Crown Court to inform the decisions made on sitting days;



Justice Committee

- The data and modelling on effect of the number of sitting days allocated on the number of cases that could be disposed of in the Crown Court in 2024/25;
- How the cost of a sitting day in the Crown Court was calculated;
- The cost implications of imposing a cap on sitting days in 2024/25;
- How much it would have cost to have allowed the Crown Court to sit to capacity in 2024/25;
- Any other data or modelling held by HMCTS that was used to inform the decision on sitting days in the Crown Court in 2024-25.

We would be grateful if this information could be provided by Thursday 12 December.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Slaughter MP
Chair, Justice Committee