



Ministry  
of Justice

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary  
of State for Justice

**MoJ ref: SUB119883**

Lords Constitutional Committee  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0AA

12 December 2024

Dear Lords Constitutional Committee,

### **INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE CRIMINAL COURTS**

I am writing to inform you that the Lord Chancellor, with the agreement of the Lady Chief Justice, has appointed Sir Brian Leveson to chair an Independent Review of the Criminal Courts. This review will build on previous reviews of the criminal courts, namely the 2001 Review of the Criminal Courts in England and Wales by Lord Justice Auld and the 2015 report into Efficiency in Criminal Proceedings by Sir Brian Leveson.

It will consider how the criminal courts could be reformed to ensure cases are dealt with proportionately in light of the current pressures on the Crown Court, and how they could operate as efficiently as possible. The review will report on options for long-term reform by late Spring 2025, following up with findings on court efficiency by Autumn 2025. The recommendations provided will help us to deliver a more efficient and effective criminal court system and improved timeliness for victims, witnesses and defendants.


I would like to thank Baroness Drake for her response on 14 October, following my correspondence to you on 25 September. I am pleased to confirm that the latest Criminal Courts Statistics will be published today, setting out the position up to the end of September 2024.

You will recall that following the issues that were discovered earlier this year in relation to our criminal court data, officials across HMCTS and the wider Ministry have undertaken work to quality assure data relating to the open caseloads in the magistrates' and Crown courts. The Lord Chancellor asked the department to commission an external auditor to look into the data so we could be certain of the scale of the challenge ahead of us in tackling the Crown Court backlog. KPMG have now completed an external assurance review of the methodology and process used to produce the Crown Court caseload statistics. The finding of KPMG's report is that the public can have a significant level of confidence in the Crown Court caseload statistics. A summary of the key findings of the assurance review has been published alongside the updated statistics.

Whilst it is positive that we now have data on which we can rely, these statistics show the scale of the challenge that we face. That is why, I am pleased to confirm that Sir Brian Leveson, as the chair of the independent review, will begin his work shortly.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ponsonby", is centered within a rectangular box. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

**LORD PONSONBY OF SHULBREDE**