



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage
*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Housing and Local Government*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Lord Strathclyde
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

21st March 2025

Dear *Lord Strathclyde*

Thank you for your letter of 13 February on behalf of the Constitution Committee about the Renters' Rights Bill ('the Bill') and the readiness of the Courts.

We recognise the vital importance of a well-functioning court system that enables the efficient access and administration of justice. While we want to ensure that wherever possible court action is the last resort, we appreciate the courts must provide a smooth and efficient possession process for the minority of tenancies where this becomes necessary. As such, we are working closely with the Ministry of Justice and HM Courts and Tribunal Service to assess the effects of our legislation. We will make sure that the justice system is prepared for any changes to caseload and procedures which will be required for our reforms.

As you are aware, this Government will not proceed with an assessment of the operation of possession proceedings for rented properties before the Bill is implemented, as was planned by the previous administration. We do not believe it is appropriate to tie the implementation date of these urgently needed reforms to an assessment of court readiness, or any other arbitrary targets. Quarterly data on the operation of the court possession process for rented properties is already published, and will continue to be published, by the Ministry of Justice. The published statistics include both the volumes and timeliness of possession orders and the enforcement of those orders. We want to move as quickly as possible with our reforms, to improve security and stability in the private rented sector. Tenants and landlords have already waited too long for these changes to justify any further delay.

In the longer term, we expect our reforms to reduce the volume of court possession claims, as only those cases where there is a clear, well-evidenced ground for possession will be able to proceed. This will help to offset any increased pressure on the courts resulting from our reforms. This is in addition to our continued work with the Ministry of Justice to explore options for early dispute resolution that you highlighted in your letter.

The Secretary of State has, as you note in your letter, committed to reforms of the court system which include digitising the court possession process. Work is underway at HM Courts and Tribunal Service to build a new digital end-to-end service for resolving all possession claims in the County Courts in England and Wales. These improvements will make processes more efficient and easier to understand, while preserving the vital statutory protections for tenants already built in, such as time to seek legal advice. A delivery timetable for this new digital service is dependent on having

the necessary legislation in place through the Bill. It would not be the best use of taxpayers' money to spend millions of pounds building a new system without complete certainty as to the final content of the legislation underpinning it.

Regarding your query about consultation with the judiciary, it is not routine practice for government to consult the judiciary on the development of legislation given the constitutional position. However, we have engaged closely with the judiciary in relation to the readiness of the court system to adapt to the changes, including through ongoing consultation on the digitisation of the possessions process, and on county court rules and procedures.

Thank you and the Constitution Committee for your engagement on the Renters' Rights Bill and I hope you find this response to your questions helpful. I would be happy to discuss any further questions you may have on the Bill.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Baroness Taylor'.

BARONESS TAYLOR OF STEVENAGE

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government