



Andy Slaughter MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ Ref: SUB132012

19 February 2026

Dear Andy,

COURTSDesk

Thank you for your letter following the update I provided to the House on the subject of Courtsdesk. I want to reassure you that this is a commitment I share and have accepted the findings of the Justice Committee's 2022 report on *Open Justice: court reporting in the digital age*.

We suspended Courtsdesk's access to data because of concerns the arrangement with HMCTS has not been followed. HMCTS must be able to trust providers to use sensitive data in accordance with agreed rules.

The terms of the pilot with Courtsdesk - currently suspended - are publicly available on GOV.UK (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6114fe3c8fa8f53dce9605b6/Amended_Courtsdesk_Arrangement_-_Aug_2021_SIGNED_.pdf).

As a result of these concerns, we decided to suspend Courtsdesk's access to the court listing data. Can I assure the committee, however, that contrary to media reports no court records data has been deleted. The data held by Courtsdesk is derived from copies of magistrates' court lists and registers, and Single Justice Procedure registers, issued by HMCTS. Lists and registers are not case files; it is not an archive of court records.

HMCTS continues to hold these records and journalists can access them by contacting HMCTS or the relevant court as they did prior to 2020. The only change is that journalists cannot currently access Courtsdesk's particular services.

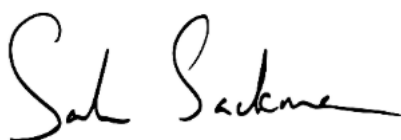
Journalists have always had, and will continue to have, the right to access court information to support accurate and timely reporting. This includes long-established arrangements for magistrates' courts to provide copies of court lists, registers, and - where appropriate - other court documents, free of charge and in line with our media protocol, which can be found on GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-staff-on-supporting-media-access-to-courts-and-tribunals>). There has been no change or restriction to the rights of journalists to observe court hearings and to access related information.

We recognise that the ability for journalists to access and search courts lists in a single place is helpful. Therefore we are currently doing three things: first, we have launched a market engagement exercise for new providers to reuse our data under a new licensing regime (which would be open to Courtsdesk to apply for); second, in the interim, we have contacted Courtsdesk with a view to potentially reestablishing their service provided they can demonstrate they will comply with our data protection requirements; third, by the end of March we will be expanding the Court and Tribunal Hearings (CaTH) service, an online portal which allows journalists and the public to access and search court-related information. By the end of March, CaTH will include Magistrates' and Crown Court lists alongside the Civil, Family and Tribunal hearing lists already published.

The public has a right to expect open justice and access to court data by journalists, but they are also entitled to expect that sensitive, personal data will be properly handled by companies that abide by data protection laws and the terms that Government sets.

I hope this provides reassurance that the Government remains firmly committed to open justice and to supporting the media's vital role in reporting court proceedings. I would be happy to update the Committee further as this work progresses.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Sackman', with a stylized, cursive script.

SARAH SACKMAN KC MP
Minister Of State