



**Judiciary of  
England and Wales**

# **Judicial Response to the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts**

17 July 2026



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# Foreword by the Lady Chief Justice

I would like to thank Sir Brian Leveson and his team for their engagement with the judiciary on the current state of the system at all stages during his comprehensive two-part Independent Review of the Criminal Courts (IRCC). As Head of Criminal Justice for the judiciary, I would also like to record my gratitude to the judiciary, including the magistrates, to the legal professions and to HMCTS court staff who continue to work tirelessly in the criminal courts across England and Wales.

The IRCC was commissioned by the Government in response to the significant challenges facing the Magistrates' and Crown Court; and to the record backlogs which have created unacceptable delays for complainants, defendants and witnesses. It was welcomed by the judiciary. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp increase in the outstanding caseload, several factors before and after the pandemic have led to the current position. The most significant of these is sustained underinvestment in the criminal justice system over many years.

It is therefore vital that any structural and efficiency-related reforms arising from the IRCC are supported by sufficient long-term funding (including capital) and resources if the outstanding caseload is to be reduced and timeliness improved for the benefit of all criminal court users, and in the interests of justice.

For the time being, I am pleased that the Government has removed the cap on sitting days in the Crown Court this year. This enables the Crown Court to sit to maximum levels. It also allows greater flexibility and innovation in listing practices.

In accordance with its independent role and constitutional convention, the judiciary makes no comment on recommendations relating to policy proposals, which are for the Government, the various agencies within the criminal justice system and for Parliament to consider. The judicial response therefore relates only to those recommendations (or those parts of them) that concern my responsibilities as Lady Chief Justice and President of the Courts of England and Wales. These include those responsibilities given to me under section 7 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 for the maintenance of appropriate arrangements for the training, guidance and deployment of the judiciary, and for the allocation of work within the courts.

The response makes reference to some of the excellent reforms (and business as usual improvements) arising from the significant work currently underway and being led by the judiciary in courts across England and Wales, in the Judicial College, and through the Criminal Courts Improvement Group (CCIG). I am pleased that Sir Brian was able to attend CCIG meetings when engaging with the judiciary on the IRCC.

The CCIG is chaired by the Senior Presiding Judge. It was established in 2021, and brings together a range of criminal justice agencies who work collaboratively to improve the performance of the criminal courts in England and Wales. Under the auspices of the CCIG, the judiciary has recently produced, for example, a National Listing Framework and revised Guidance on Live Links (Video Hearings) in the Criminal Courts. Significant progress has also been made through the CCIG in other areas of work designed to improve efficiency and ensure a consistency of approach and practice in the courts, including on Better Case Management, the improvement of Pre-Sentence Reports, and the co-ordination of the responsible use of artificial intelligence. Further

details of the CCIG's work are set out in the Annex below to provide further context to the judiciary's response to the IRCC.

As will be seen, the judiciary addresses in this response those recommendations on which comment is appropriate. Where a different approach is proposed to that of the recommendation, it is based on the wealth of expertise and experience of judges who work in the criminal courts and of judges in leadership roles.

# Judicial Response to the IRCC's Judiciary-Related Recommendations

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| 23                      | I recommend that a Criminal Practice Direction is introduced as a matter of urgency to set an expectation on the judiciary to apply Goodyear (advance sentence indications) in all trials, irrespective of a request from the defence, in the Crown Court, preferably at the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH), unless good reasons are given not to provide an indication. | <p>This would involve a change in the law. At present, and for good reason, Goodyear directions are permitted only at the request of the defence (and the discretion of the judge). Further, Goodyear indications are now sought much less often because the Sentencing Council's Sentencing Guidelines mean that lawyers are generally well placed to predict what sentence is likely to result from a guilty plea. The judiciary considers that, on balance, the risk of undue pressure being felt by a defendant to plead guilty when they would not otherwise have done so outweighs the potential benefits of implementing this proposal.</p> <p>Continuing the current position in the application of Goodyear based on a request from the defence lawyers, where appropriate, enables a more calibrated approach. There would also be significant (adverse) consequences for judicial preparation time and efficiency more generally if Goodyear directions were to be required in every case as recommended. This would, for example, potentially require the judge to be given all information relevant to sentence, (and the time to assess it) at every PTPH.</p> |
| 24                      | I recommend that the PTPH form should be updated immediately to include a requirement for the defendant's legal representative to confirm that they have asked their                                                                                                                                                                                                                | The judiciary considers that the PTPH form needs further improvement and digitalisation. This work will be led by the Senior Presiding Judge's Office, with input                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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|                         | client whether they wish to seek an advance indication of sentence at the PTPH.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | from the Criminal Procedure Rules Committee.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 26                      | I recommend that there should be a pilot scheme to test whether the PTPH should be delayed to ensure proper engagement between the parties. Further, I recommend this pilot is implemented forthwith and before my other recommendations have been added to the statute book.                                                                                                                              | The judiciary has not seen any reliable evidence that delaying the PTPH would result in a greater number of guilty pleas. The current timescales are sufficient to enable proper engagement if parties do that which is already required of them. Delaying the PTPH would create a significant risk of worsening timeliness for court users, without necessarily providing the intended benefits. The judiciary will keep this recommendation under review in case further evidence emerges. |
| 38                      | I recommend that the judiciary considers making greater use of flexible deployment into the Crown Court. This could start with the deployment of a greater number of District Judges (Magistrates' Courts) and Deputy District Judges (Magistrates' Courts). Deputy High Court Judges who have not been appointed Recorders could also gain criminal experience sitting in the Crown Court Bench Division. | The judiciary supports this recommendation in principle but will need to consider carefully the practical implications, including available resources to train the judges for deployment into the Crown Court and the potential impact on the capacity of Magistrates' Courts, which have considerable case backlogs.                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 39                      | I recommend that Crown Court Bench Division hearings should be heard in any available courtroom, provided it has (a) appropriate access, and (b) recording facilities can be made available. It will also provide for the possibility that Crown Court cases could be heard in buildings in which magistrates' courts also sit.                                                                            | If Parliament decides to introduce a Crown Court Bench Division, the judiciary would support these proposals in principle with the following proviso for (a) that the court estate can be suitably configured and that security risks are properly assessed by HMCTS and mitigated. Physical location of cases will be dependent on the availability of suitable court rooms; care will be needed to ensure there would be no adverse impact on the capacity of Magistrates' Courts to sit.  |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| 57                      | I recommend that Local Criminal Justice Boards should have a Resident Judge and a representative from the magistracy in attendance, and that the Boards should be held outside court hours. The Resident Judge should receive training on Local Criminal Justice Board operations through the Judicial College as part of the induction training for Resident Judges (that I recommend at Chapter 10 (The Judiciary and Legal Workforce)).                                                                                           | The judiciary will consider this recommendation further once the terms of reference for Local Criminal Justice Boards have been finalised.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 88                      | I recommend that the Lady Chief Justice consider the implementation of a Criminal Practice Direction that empowers judges to prevent new issues from being raised at trial that were not raised or disclosed at the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing, without good cause.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | This recommendation will be considered carefully, taking into account current case management powers and any risks to the right to a fair trial.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 92                      | I recommend that the Senior Judiciary develop and introduce a National Listing Framework for the Crown Court. This should include, as a minimum, consistent terminology, consistent principles on which listing should be based and a prioritisation scheme to include a definitive list of relevant factors to be taken into account and an objective weighting to be attached to each factor based on the principles. It must also be designed in such a way as to be readily capable of being turned into a digital listing tool. | <p>The judiciary has published a National Listing Framework through the creation of a <a href="#">Practice Direction on Listing in the Criminal Courts</a>, which is in force from 1 October 2026. It is intended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) promote a more consistent national approach to listing,</li> <li>(b) help reduce the number of ineffective trials,</li> <li>(c) ensure more effective prioritisation of cases based on the core principle of assessing the human impact of delay on participants, and</li> <li>(d) increase public understanding and confidence in the listing of cases.</li> </ul> <p>The judiciary is working with HMCTS on its development of listing tools to improve effectiveness and efficiency.</p> |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 97                      | I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary work to normalise the practice of moving cases between Crown Courts, including across circuit boundaries, to maximise the use of sitting days and available capacity. This should include updating Criminal Practice Directions to a) reflect the wider circumstances in which a case should be moved from one Crown Court to another and b) replace the requirement for Presiding Judge and Delivery Director agreement with a requirement for Resident Judge agreement from both sending and receiving courts. Similar consideration should be given to the practicability of moving cases between magistrates' courts and the local process required to do so. | The judiciary's new National Listing Framework sets out that a case may be transferred between Crown Court centres where necessary for the efficient administration of justice. It also enables listing in the Crown Court to be organised on a regional basis, combining the capacity of more than one Crown Court centre within a circuit or defined area. The judiciary will work closely with HMCTS to ensure effective administration. |
| 100                     | I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the Judicial College, as appropriate, place increased emphasis on case management principles in their training materials for magistrates, legal advisers and Case Progression Officers (if implemented), and professional bodies must do the same for their members.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | The judiciary supports this recommendation in principle, subject to sufficient funding and resourcing for the Judicial College. (The Judicial College has sole responsibility for the design and delivery of judicial training.)                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 102                     | I recommend that the Judicial College updates its magistrates' training programme to include effective completion of the Better Case Management form so that magistrates understand the consequences of non-compliance and improve the quality of completed forms.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | The judiciary supports this recommendation, which will be incorporated into magistrates' training by the Judicial College.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 103                     | I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service adapts current training for legal advisers to include Better Case Management form completion as part of the legal adviser training to address non-                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | The judiciary supports this recommendation in principle, subject to sufficient funding and resourcing for the Judicial College (which has joint responsibility with HMCTS for training legal advisers).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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|                         | compliance with completing the form and improve the standard of completion so that sufficient detail is included.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 104                     | I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service update the Better Case Management form to include, at a minimum, a) a standard direction for an advocates' meeting pre-Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing to ensure completion of the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing form in readiness for the hearing; b) any request for an indication of sentence at the pre-Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing; c) dates and times for compliance with directions (including when key materials are to be served); and, d) a tick box to signify an uncompleted form as a result of advocates that have been unable, or unwilling, to provide the information required of them. | The judiciary agrees with the need to make further improvements to this form. This will be taken forward by the Criminal Courts Improvement Group's Working Group on Better Case Management, chaired by Mrs Justice Cutts DBE. |
| 108                     | I recommend that the Judicial College reviews its current training offer on Better Case Management to ensure that all the criminal judiciary are up to date on current practices, and professional bodies must do the same for their members.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | The judiciary supports this recommendation in principle, subject to sufficient funding and resourcing for the Judicial College.                                                                                                |
| 111                     | I recommend that the Senior Judiciary update the Criminal Practice Directions to provide guidance on email or other communication to judges via the Case Progression Officer and that the professional bodies provide consistent and clear guidance on the etiquette of writing emails to judges, outlining the appropriate approach to communication outside the courtroom, and safeguarding judicial                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | The judiciary supports in principle the recommendation to provide further guidance on communications. This will need further careful consideration and engagement with the professions.                                        |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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|                         | respect and maintaining professionalism.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 114                     | I recommend that the Senior Judiciary update Criminal Practice Directions to prevent the routine listing of hearings solely to ensure engagement or adherence to directions.                                                                                                                                          | The judiciary agrees that hearings should not routinely be listed solely to ensure engagement or adherence to directions. The judiciary will consider any evidence on the current practice. A balanced approach that safeguards judicial discretion is required.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 115                     | I recommend that the Senior Judiciary update Criminal Practice Directions so that a newly appointed advocate on a case should be required promptly to review the case upon appointment and submit a formal notification to the court of any outstanding issues impacting trial readiness at the earliest opportunity. | This proposal raises difficult practical considerations and will require consultation with professional bodies and other stakeholders.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 116                     | I recommend that the Senior Judiciary roll-out the Final Review Hearings process nationally, as piloted by Liverpool Crown Court, subject to robust evaluation.                                                                                                                                                       | The judiciary's new National Listing Framework sets out requirements in the run up to trial. Four weeks before the trial week, the court must publish an Advance List showing the trials and, as far as practicable, other hearings to be listed in that week. Three weeks before the trial week, the court listing or case progression staff must hold a Case Progression Meeting to review trials listed for that week and to consider readiness and likely effectiveness. The meeting must include staff of the Crown Prosecution Service or other relevant prosecutor and the Witness Care Unit. The meeting must have regard to Certificates of Trial Readiness and any representations received from the defence or other interested parties. Two weeks before the trial week, the court must publish a Firm List showing the trials and, as far as practicable, other hearings to be listed in the trial week. |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| 117                     | <p>I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should adopt a 'test, learn and cost' approach to enable first hearings in the magistrates' court to be conducted partially remotely by default for defendants appearing in custody. Evaluation of this should consider impacts on both the process and the quality of justice.</p> | <p>The Lady Chief Justice recently issued revised <a href="#">Guidance on Live Links in Criminal Courts</a> pursuant to section 51(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. The Practice Direction on Listing in the Criminal Courts requires this Guidance to be followed. The Guidance establishes a presumptive framework for the use of live links in criminal proceedings in England and Wales. It identifies the circumstances in which the court will ordinarily make a live link direction, and those in which in-person attendance will ordinarily be required. It is intended to achieve a more consistent and streamlined national approach to remote participation, through the use of live links, in the criminal courts across England and Wales.</p> <p>The Guidance sets out that <i>ordinarily</i> an adult defendant in custody and advocates may attend a preliminary hearing in the Magistrates' Court by live link provided the resources and facilities are in place in the police station. The court retains discretion in every case to depart from this where the interests of justice require. The judiciary, through the Judicial Office, is working with HMCTS and other agencies to scope a pilot in which the first hearing in the Magistrates' Court for a defendant in custody will be by live link from the police station. Whilst these hearings are already taking place by live link from a police station in several locations, the pilot is intended to help HMCTS and other agencies better understand and address any operational and resourcing issues to enable more regular and effective use, where appropriate.</p> |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| 118                     | I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should conduct a proof of concept for fully remote Single Justice Procedure referral hearings, with appropriate provisions made to maintain public access and uphold the principle of open justice. Evaluation of the proof of concept should consider impacts on both system efficiency and quality of justice.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | The judiciary, through the Judicial Office, is working with HMCTS to consider a pilot for fully remote Single Justice Procedure referral hearings. Details of the potential pilot, including its scope, duration, and location(s) are still to be confirmed. Any fully remote hearing must comply with the principles of open justice.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 119                     | I recommend that all preliminary hearings other than the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (including mentions, Further Case Management Hearings and Pre-Trial Reviews) should be conducted in a partially remote format by default, with the ability for the judge to move to fully remote hearings if lists are constructed in a way that is suitable to do so. His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should facilitate this and in doing so consider the open justice processes for supporting remote observation of these hearings, including consideration of a secure portal. The impact of this change should be monitored and evaluated. | The Lady Chief Justice's revised Guidance on Live Links in Criminal Courts sets out that <i>ordinarily</i> an adult defendant in custody and advocates may attend a preliminary hearing in the Crown Court (other than the PTPH) by live link. The court retains discretion in every case to depart from this where the interests of justice require.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 120                     | I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should maintain the presumption that trials are conducted in person. However, they should enable police and professional witnesses to attend via video link by default. The trial judge should retain the power in every case to order in-person attendance, including where requested to do so by the defence.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | The Lady Chief Justice's revised Guidance on Live Links in Criminal Courts sets out that <i>ordinarily</i> trials should be conducted in person but that a professional, police or expert witness should <i>ordinarily</i> attend trial by live link where the evidence is peripheral, limited, or unlikely to involve substantial challenge; where credibility is not central to the issues; and where effective examination and cross-examination can properly take place remotely. An application by the witness to attend by live link will not ordinarily be required where the |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | above criteria are met. The court retains discretion in every case to depart from the presumptive position where the interests of justice require.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 121                     | I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should only require remanded defendants to appear in person for sentencing hearings if a victim impact statement will be delivered in court. The Crown Prosecution Service should confirm whether this will take place ahead of time. Otherwise, it should be the presumption that defendants on remand will appear via prison video link, subject to a contrary order by the judge. In addition, I recommend that confiscation and other ancillary order hearings should be conducted partially remotely by default. | <p>The Lady Chief Justice's revised Guidance on Live Links in Criminal Courts sets out that where an adult defendant is in custody, attendance at sentencing should <i>ordinarily</i> take place by live link where the court is satisfied that it is in the interests of justice. In deciding whether it is in the interests of justice for the defendant to attend by live link, the court should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. whether any victim is attending court in person;</li> <li>ii. whether a victim impact statement is to be read (if so, subject to the victim's views, it may be in the interests of justice for the defendant to appear in person);</li> <li>iii. whether family members or others significantly affected are attending;</li> <li>iv. the seriousness of the sentence under consideration;</li> <li>v. whether substantial factual issues arise.</li> </ul> <p>The court retains discretion in every case to depart from this where the interests of justice require.</p> <p>The Guidance also states that an adult defendant in custody and the advocates may <i>ordinarily</i> attend a confiscation or ancillary order hearing by live link. The court retains discretion in every case to depart</p> |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | from this where the interests of justice require.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 122                     | I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary consider expanding Crown Court sitting-day hours for the Crown Court Bench Division and model the impact this could have.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | The judiciary is not currently persuaded that expanding Crown Court sitting-day hours is operationally feasible or that this would have an impact on reducing the backlogs. Any such proposal would as a minimum require a proper equality impact assessment and a thorough consultation with the professions and others involved in the criminal justice system in order to assess the relevant impact on their functions in supporting the efficient operation of the Crown Court. |
| 136                     | I recommend that the Judicial College keeps under review training available for judges in the Crown Court and for District Judges (Magistrates' courts) on the use of expert scientific evidence. I also encourage the Royal Society to continue publishing and updating primers for judges. A consultation should take place with the Forensic Science Regulator and the police to ensure this training is fit for purpose. | The judiciary supports this recommendation in principle, subject to sufficient funding and resourcing for the Judicial College.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 141                     | I recommend as part of a national listing model that consistency should be introduced into the way in which section 28 hearings are scheduled and could include considering piloting partially remote section 28 cross examinations.                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>The judiciary's new National Listing Framework sets out the following requirements regarding listing of section 28 cases:</p> <p>a) The fact that the cross-examination of a witness has been pre-recorded pursuant to section 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 must not, of itself, result in a reduction in the priority given to the case.</p> <p>b) Such cases must continue to be managed and listed having regard to</p>                              |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>the human impact of delay, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the impact of delay on the witness whose evidence has been recorded;</li> <li>ii. the impact on any other participant;</li> <li>iii. the overall fairness of the proceedings.</li> </ul> <p>This provides a measure of consistency in approach. When considering how evidence is to be tested under cross-examination however (including whether this is to be remotely or in person) flexibility is necessary as account must always be taken of the individual circumstances of vulnerable complainants.</p> |
| 163                     | I recommend that the Senior Judiciary continue working closely with the Ministry of Justice as it aims to reform the role of magistrates, including how they are trained, inducted into the magistracy and the nature of the roles. | The judiciary supports this recommendation and will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Justice and HMCTS in relation to magistrates. The Judicial College continues to be responsible for magistrates' training and will respond to any changes required subject to sufficient funding and resourcing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 165                     | I recommend that Judicial Office considers how best to recognise the contributions of magistrates.                                                                                                                                  | The judiciary supports this recommendation. However, the responsibility for recognition of magistrates' contributions lies with the Lord Chancellor. Judicial Office officials are working with Ministry of Justice officials to support a range of recognition methods for the important work of magistrates.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 166                     | I recommend that the Judicial Appointments Commission reviews recruitment processes, moving towards a more flexible model by 2027 (allowing for current recruitment                                                                 | This is a matter for the Judicial Appointments Commission.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| IRCC Recommendation No. | IRCC Recommendation Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Judicial Response                                                                                                                                                           |
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|                         | campaigns to end) to facilitate better forecasting of resources within courts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 167                     | I recommend that the Judicial Office implements required notice periods on retirement for the judiciary, working closely with the Judicial Appointments Commission in the design and implementation of this period to account for wider recruitment processes. Suitable notice should also be required in relation to the taking of leave. | The judiciary will consider this recommendation carefully but notes that judicial terms and conditions are a matter for the Lord Chancellor and the Ministry of Justice.    |
| 168                     | I recommend that the Judicial Office works with the Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate) to review the deployment process for District Judges and Deputy District Judges (Magistrates' courts) and implements a model that more effectively balances local needs and appropriate national oversight.                                   | The judiciary suggests that this will require further careful consideration by the Chief Magistrate once the number of District Judges (Magistrates' Courts) has increased. |
| 169                     | I recommend that the Judicial College, in collaboration with His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, reviews training resources for newly appointed Resident Judges, with particular focus on the oversight of court processes, to support their induction and ensure the smooth running of the Crown Courts.                          | The judiciary supports this in principle, subject to sufficient funding and resourcing for the Judicial College.                                                            |
| 170                     | I recommend that the Judicial Appointments Commission and the Judicial College survey sitting judges to understand barriers to career progression and understand their support needs to develop a career pipeline within the judiciary.                                                                                                    | The judiciary does not consider that a separate survey is needed: relevant questions are already included in the Judicial Attitudes Survey (conducted every two years).     |

# Annex: Summary of Delivery by the Criminal Courts Improvement Group

## Introduction

The Crown Court Improvement Group was created in 2021 by the then Lord Chief Justice to support recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2024, its scope was expanded to cover the Magistrates' Court, and it became the Criminal Courts Improvement Group (CCIG). The CCIG is chaired by the Senior Presiding Judge and includes representatives from the main criminal justice agencies. It is focused on delivering operational improvements in the criminal justice system in England and Wales. The key achievements and ongoing activity of the CCIG's six working groups – each chaired by a senior judge – are summarised below.

## Listing

### Achieved

- Publication of a [National Listing Framework](#) on 6 July 2026. It is intended to:
  - (a) Promote a more consistent national approach to listing,
  - (b) Reduce the number of ineffective trials,
  - (c) Ensure more effective prioritisation based on the human impact of delay on participants, and
  - (d) Increase public understanding and confidence in the listing of cases.

### Ongoing

- Reviewing digital listing tools to standardise existing systems and introduce new tools to enhance listing.
- Working with HMCTS to explore the use of AI to assist judges, supported by listing officers, to make listing decisions.
- HMCTS is revising the listings manual for staff including to align with the National Listing Framework.

## Remote Participation

### Achieved

- Revised [Guidance on Live Links](#) issued by the Lady Chief Justice on 6 July 2026. It is intended to:
  - (a) Promote a more consistent national approach to the use of live links (video hearings),
  - (b) Encourage greater use of live links to help improve system productivity, and
  - (c) Streamline processes.

## Ongoing

- Overseeing the planning of pilots on Virtual Remand Courts, a National Video Model, and referrals from the Single Justice Procedure.
- Improving access to pre-hearing conferences for defendants on remand and their legal representatives.
- Developing a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Crown Prosecution Service and HMCTS to support police witnesses to attend some court hearings remotely.

## Pre-Sentence Reports (PSRs)

### Achieved

- All probation regions have launched Regional Action Plans to identify and address barriers to PSR timeliness.
- The Probation Service developed a new single written PSR digital template and digital PSR Allocation Tool.
- Following a successful pilot, the Probation Service made verification reports available in all Magistrates' Courts.

### Ongoing

- Supporting work to test and refine the new PSR digital template and PSR Allocation Tool.
- Reinvigorating Magistrates' Court pre-court briefing sessions to reduce avoidable adjournments.
- The Probation Service is working to improve staff access to defendants' contact details to support the quicker arrangement of interviews.
- Reviewing the types of pre-sentence advice and reports provided to courts to ensure advice is proportionate while maintaining judicial confidence and assessment quality.

## Artificial Intelligence (AI)

### Achieved

- Successful sharing of information amongst criminal justice agencies on the current and planned use of AI.
- Collated details of existing AI governance, guidance, operating procedures and internal principles.
- Agreement reached on the need for strong guardrails, transparency requirements, strict confidentiality and data handling rules, and the principle that AI must assist – not replace – human decision-making.

### Ongoing

- Supporting work to develop, test and implement a range of new AI tools to help improve system productivity.

## **Domestic Abuse: Best Listing Practices**

### **Achieved**

- Refined the scope of cases suitable for inclusion in new domestic abuse national listing guidance.
- Reviewed draft principles for the Magistrates' Court, and draft guidance for the Crown Court covering Plea and Trial Preparation Hearings, Pre-Trial Reviews and trial readiness.

### **Ongoing**

- Developing national guidance to support the swifter progress of domestic abuse cases through the criminal courts.

## **Better Case Management (BCM)**

### **Achieved**

- Produced an interim report which concluded that the principles contained in the 2023 BCM Handbook remain sound but compliance with them is uneven and inconsistent.

### **Ongoing**

- Developing practical options to increase awareness of, and support compliance with, BCM principles.





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