



BRIEFING PAPER

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Court and tribunal closures

By Jack Simson Caird

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Contributing Authors:

Cassie Barton, Social and General Statistics,
Court statistics

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Summary

This briefing paper analyses court and tribunal closures in England and Wales. Since 2010, there have been two major court closure programmes: the then Her Majesty's Courts Service's (HCMS) Court Estate Reform Programme (CERP) (2010-2014) and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service's (HMCTS) Estates Reform Project (ERP) (2015-). The CERP resulted in 103 magistrates' courts and 54 county courts being earmarked for closure. The ERP has led to 86 court and tribunal buildings to be scheduled for closure. These latest closures are one part of HMCTS' Reform Programme, which aims to improve access to justice by both modernising the court and tribunal estate and by making greater use of technology.

In relation to the ERP (2015-), the Ministry of Justice published some statistics about individual courts and tribunals as part of its original consultation document. This data is summarised in the Appendix tables. The first table shows the courts selected for closure by region. The second shows travel time statistics – the proportion of people able to reach the court in under an hour by car and by public transport. The third summarises statistics on utilization rates, accommodation adequacy and the estimated annual cost of running each court. An Excel file containing all of these statistics is available for download from the online version of this briefing paper. The Appendix also contains a list of those courts closed between May 2010 and July 2015.

1. Introduction

Since 2010, the court and tribunal estate has changed significantly. In between May 2010 and July 2015, 146 courts were closed.¹ On 11 February 2016, Shailesh Vara MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, announced that 86 courts and tribunals would be closed:

On average, the 86 courts we are closing are used for just over a third of their available hearing time. That is equivalent to less than 2 days a week. It will still be the case that after these closures, over 97% of citizens will be able to reach their required court within an hour by car. This represents a change of just 1 percentage points for both criminal and County Courts. The proportion able to reach a tribunal within an hour by car will remain unchanged at 83%.²

The Government had originally consulted on plans to close 91 courts and tribunals.

The closures are one element of Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service's Reform Programme, which began in March 2014. The programme aims to modernise the court system through the use of technology, rationalise the court estate, and change the role of case offices (originally known as Designated Judicial Officers).

The forward to the Government's consultation on the closures, published in July 2015, stated:

We can only provide better access to justice if we take difficult decisions to reduce the cost of our estate and reinvest the savings.³

Successive governments have identified the courts estate as a target for efficiency savings. There are two main reasons given. The first is that the utilisation rate of some courts is low. This means that the workloads of these courts can be transferred, without pushing recipient courts beyond capacity. The second is the policy aim of reforming access to justice through modernisation, and by increased use of technology in particular. Increased use of online forms and video links for witnesses, for example, could help to mitigate the impact of the loss court buildings upon access to justice.

An effective legal system relies upon a network of well-maintained and fit-for-purpose courts. Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service's (HMCTS) estate is the physical embodiment of the state's judicial powers, and for that power to function in the public interest, individuals

¹ See Appendix

² Shailesh Vara MP, HM Courts and Tribunals Service, 11 February 2016, HCWS536

³ Ministry of Justice, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales' (2015) p5

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must have effective access to that estate.⁴ This requirement is in part reflected in the duty placed upon the Lord Chancellor by section 1 of the *Courts Act 2003*, which states that he or she should “ensure that there is an efficient and effective system to support the carrying on of the business of— (a) the Supreme Court, (b) county courts, and (c) magistrates’ courts, and that appropriate services are provided for those courts”.

The Government’s closures have been subject to criticism. The Law Society president Jonathan Smithers said:

We are disappointed that the government is pressing ahead with the closure of so many courts. The majority of these closures will make it more difficult for a significant number of people to get to court, disproportionately affecting people living in rural areas, those with disabilities and lower income families.⁵

Justice, a law reform and human rights organisation, raised the following concerns in relation to the proposed closures:

JUSTICE is concerned that the current court closures be informed not just by how courts are used at the moment, but also how judicial processes are likely to develop in the next five to ten years and beyond, and what ‘courts’ will be needed to facilitate these processes. Key criterion in this regard should be flexibility of space, both in terms of space and design and also the contracts related to their operation. In this regard, the ability to use the court estate flexibly in the future – and to facilitate access to justice and fair trial regardless of the fluctuating investment in the justice system – will be key.⁶

The Government has committed itself to moving to a system where access to justice is not defined by proximity to a court or tribunal building.⁷ By implementing the proposals of Sir Brian Leveson, on criminal procedure,⁸ and Lord Justice Briggs, on the civil courts,⁹ the Government is intending to alter the way in which court users interact with the estate, and therefore minimise the impact of the reduction in the number of buildings.

⁴ A Le Sueur, ‘The Foundations of Justice’ in J Jowell, D Oliver and C O’Cinneide (eds) *The Changing Constitution* (OUP 2015) p222

⁵ Law Society, [Press Release](#) 11 February 2016

⁶ Justice, [HMCTS Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales – consultation reponse](#) (2015)

⁷ Ministry of Justice and HMCTS, [Response to the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales](#) (2016) p4

⁸ Sir Brian Leveson, [Review of Efficiency in Criminal Proceedings](#), January 2015

⁹ Lord Justice Briggs, [Civil Courts Structure Review, interim report](#), January 2016

2. Estates Reform Project 2015–

2.1 The Government’s national consultation response

On 11 February 2016, the Government published its [national response](#) to the consultation on its proposals to close 91 courts and tribunals.¹⁰ The consultation response announced that 86 courts and tribunals would close.¹¹ The five that will not be closed are: Stockport Magistrates’ Court and County Court; St Helens Magistrates’ Court and County Court; Bath Magistrates’ Court, County Court and Family Court; Carmarthen Civil, Family, Tribunal and Probate Hearing Centre; and West Cumbria Magistrates’ Court and County Court. The Ministry of Justice also published [a schedule of potential implementation dates](#) of when the courts will cease to provide a public service.

There were 110 responses directed at the national consultation paper.¹² 15 of supported the proposals, but a majority, 56, were critical. The Law Society argued that the impact of the closures upon to access to justice would be significant, with court users having to travel further and at greater cost.¹³ They also cited concerns that the travel times used by HCTMS represent the “best case scenario”.¹⁴ A concern which was also raised by the Magistrate’s Association and the Citizens Advice Witness Service.

More generally, the Law Society argued that the right way to improve the estate would be to enhance the level of technology first and then to assess how consider how to make savings.¹⁵ This concern was echoed by the Welsh Government who claimed that the closures were “premature” in the light of the ongoing development plans for digital platforms within the courts.¹⁶

In response to criticisms based on access to justice, the Government makes three main points. Firstly, access to justice is not only based on access to a physical court. Secondly, attending court is a rare event for

¹⁰ Ministry of Justice and HMCTS, [Response to the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales](#) (2016)

¹¹ See Appendix

¹² Ministry of Justice and HMCTS, [Response to the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales](#) (2016) 11; See Section 2.3 for analysis of the consultation documents

¹³ Ministry of Justice and HMCTS, [Response to the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales](#) (2016) p2

¹⁴ The Law Society, ‘Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales – the Law Society Response’ p3

¹⁵ Ibid p6

¹⁶ Ministry of Justice and HMCTS, [Response to the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales](#) (2016) p14

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most members of the public. Thirdly, overall the changes to the estimated travel times are small.¹⁷

In relation to value for money, the Public and Commercial Services Union argued that the proposals do not get the right balance between access to justice and cutting costs.¹⁸ In response, the Government pointed to the low utilisation rates, and to the fact that money saved will be reinvested into improving the estate.¹⁹

A number of responses highlighted concerns that courts would struggle to absorb the work generated by the closures. Shelter and Victim Support both raised the prospect of delays resulting from this added pressure.²⁰ The Government responded that it remained confident that there was sufficient capacity in the estate and that increasing the use of technology would also expand capacity through improved efficiency.²¹

A number of the consultation responses raised concerns about the impact of alternative uses of technology and alternative locations for court hearings on the most vulnerable court users. For example, the Equality and Human Rights Commission made the point that video links may not be suitable for those with visual or hearing impairments. Another concern raised related to the security of public buildings used, which may not match that offered by purpose built courts.²² By way of response, the Government emphasised its commitment to finding proportionate alternatives to court attendance, but reiterated that plans for use of technology and use of alternative buildings are both in their early stages, with review programmes and plans to establish pilots underway for each respectively.²³

Regional Consultation responses

There were over 2,100 responses to the consultation, with the overwhelming majority relating to specific courts. There are [seven regional government consultation response documents](#), each of which summarises the consultations responses for each individual court. Each regional response analyses the consultation responses in terms of the following categories: access to justice, value for money, operational efficiency and the alternative provision of services.

2.2 Context

In evidence to the Justice Committee in July 2015, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, said that the 'biggest problem' he faced was that the Ministry of Justice is an 'unprotected' Department (referring to its lack of protection from the Chancellor of Exchequer's

¹⁷ Ibid p14-16

¹⁸ Ibid p17

¹⁹ Ibid p17-18

²⁰ Ibid p19-20

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid p20-21

²³ Ibid

spending cuts).²⁴ His evidence indicated that this meant that his stated aim of achieving major reform of access to justice would have to include court closures, so that the Ministry of Justice could contribute to reducing the deficit.

Table 1: the Ministry of Justice and HM Courts and tribunals Service budgets since 2010/11.

Total managed expenditure

£million, real terms 2015/16 prices

	Ministry of Justice	HM Courts and Tribunals Service
2010-11	10,167	1,544
2011-12	9,346	1,188
2012-13	9,744	1,099
2013-14	7,661	1,036
2014-15	7,439	863
2015-16	6,914	804
change 10-11 to 15-16	-3,253	-740
% change 10-11 to 15-16	-32%	-48%

Sources: HM Treasury, Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis 2015, Table 1.13

Ministry of Justice, Annual reports and accounts 2014 to 2015, Table 1

Real terms calculated using GDP deflator, July 2015

The Ministry of Justice budget is £6.9 billion in 2015/16. It is £3.3 billion lower than it was in 2010/11, a 32% fall. The HM Courts and Tribunals Service budget is £804 million in 2015/16. It is £740 million lower than in 2010/11, a 48% fall. The Policy Exchange report 'Future Courts' stated that the courts system needs to deliver a 38% saving between 2012 and 2016.²⁵

The other important policy context is the HMCTS Reform Programme. In March 2014, Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, Chris Grayling MP, then Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, and Sir Jeremy Sullivan, Senior President of Tribunals, [announced](#) a reform programme for the resourcing and administration of HMCTS. The aim of the HMCTS Reform Programme is to deliver an improved estate and modernisation of working practices through the use of modern technology. Improving the estate is one the Programme's three aims, the others being to improve the use of IT and the allocation of work to court officials.

In January 2015, Lord Leveson's [Review of Efficiency in Criminal Proceedings](#) was published. The review made a number of recommendations relating to the need to improve the technology

²⁴ Justice Committee, The Work of the Secretary of State for Justice, 17 July 2015, HC 335, p2

²⁵ M Chambers, C MacLeod and R Davis, 'Future courts' (Policy Exchange 2014) p5

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available within the courts estate, for example by ensuring that digital evidence can be easily presented in court.²⁶

In October 2015, Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive of the HMCTS, gave a speech which explained that the court system needs to move from a “physical paradigm” towards a system which makes more use of technology:

We could deal with many cases across all spheres of the justice system in a far more proportionate way – using modern technology to consider evidence, using hearings only where necessary, and using digital channels to support work across all of our courts.²⁷

On 25 November 2015, George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced a new funding package for reform of the court and tribunal estate:

My right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor has worked with the Lord Chief Justice and others to put forward a typically bold and radical plan to transform our courts so they are fit for the modern age. Under-used courts will be closed, and I can announce today that the money saved will be used to fund a £700 million investment in new technology that will bring further and permanent long-term savings and speed up the process of justice.²⁸

In December 2015, Lord Justice Briggs’ [Civil Courts Structure Review: Interim Report](#) was published. It made a number of recommendations relating to the use of technology in the courts system, such as the creation of an Online Court and an Assisted Digital Service.

On 17 March 2016, Natalie Ceeney gave [evidence](#) to the Public Accounts Committee and discussed the HMCTS reform programme:

We are confident that we have enough physical capacity in England and Wales. We are not sure that our court buildings are as fit for purpose as they should be. One of the problems is that we have an awful lot of court buildings with only two or three hearing rooms, which makes it quite difficult to juggle cases.²⁹

She noted that some of the HMCTS estate is in poor condition, and that the aim of the closures is to generate savings that can be reinvested into modernising the estate. She also reported there is a “very active disposal plan” in place that is focused on maximising the value of the courts buildings which are to be sold.

²⁶ Lord Justice Leveson, [Review of Efficiency in Criminal Proceedings](#) (2015) p97

²⁷ N Ceeney, [A modernised court and tribunal service](#), 15 October 2015

²⁸ HC Deb 25 November 2015 c137

²⁹ N Ceeney, [Oral evidence: Efficiency in the criminal justice system](#), Public Accounts Committee 881.

2.3 The consultation

On 16 July 2015 the Government announced a consultation on plans to close: 57 magistrates' courts, 19 county courts, 2 crown courts, 4 tribunal hearing centres and 9 combined courts in England and Wales.

The consultation document included an update on the utilisation rates of the hearing rooms on the estate. In the financial year 2014/2015 the recorded utilisation levels were:

- Crown courts 71%
- County courts 53%
- Magistrates' courts 47%
- Tribunal hearing rooms 71 % [2013/14 data]³⁰

In each case the utilisation rate remains below the 80% level referred to by the Coalition Government during the CERP. While the crown courts are the best performing (up from 70% in the previous year), magistrates' courts are down from the previous year (from 55%). It is also noticeable that the 2014/15 rate for magistrates' courts is down by 17% from the 64% for 2009/10 cited by the then Government when it began the CERP in 2010.³¹

The current Government's position on rates is clear:

Overall, court utilisation levels remain unacceptably low and, while some initiatives have reduced the workload dealt with in our courts, in general our estate contains too many courtrooms, many of which cannot be used flexibly or are in poor condition.³²

There were seven regional consultations on court closures. Each of the consultation documents outlined the three principles, which are different from those used in CERP, which are used to guide its decision making on court closures:

- Ensuring access to justice
- Delivering value for money
- Enabling efficiency in the longer term

The remainder of this section considers each principle in turn.

2.4 Ensuring access to justice

The impact on access to justice is arguably the most controversial element of the proposed closures. Access to justice is an important principle of the UK's unwritten constitution. Lord Bingham of Cornhill,

³⁰ Ministry of Justice, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales' (2015) p9-10

³¹ Jonathan Djanogly MP, PQ 6 July 2010 c161W

³² Ministry of Justice, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales' (2015) p9

who was then Senior Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, argued that it was one of the eight sub rules that make up the rule of law:

My fifth sub-rule is that means must be provided for resolving, without prohibitive cost or inordinate delay, bona fide civil disputes which the parties themselves are unable to resolve...What it does is to recognise the right of unimpeded access to a court as a basic right, protected by our own domestic law, and in my view comprised within the principle of the rule of law.³³

In the case of *Daly*, Lord Bingham explained the common law right of access to justice was composed on three rights, one of which is the right of access to a court.³⁴ In the recent case of *R (The Children's Rights Alliance for England) v The Secretary of State for Justice*,³⁵ Lord Justice Laws explained "the common law recognises access to the Queen's courts as a constitutional right".³⁶ In *R (Witham) v Lord Chancellor*,³⁷ the then Laws J said:

Access to the courts is a constitutional right; it can only be denied by the government if it persuades Parliament to pass legislation which specifically - in effect by express provision - permits the executive to turn people away from the court door.

In that case, the Court held that a Government order, which had the effect of imposing courts fees on those in receipt of income support was unlawful because the parent Act, the *Supreme Court Act 1981*, did not expressly provide the power to limit the right of access to justice. The right to effective access to the courts is also protected by Article 6 (1) of the European Convention on Human Rights.³⁸

In relation to the planned court closures, the Government argued that effective access to justice "does not necessarily mean providing physical access to a building or require us to have a purpose built court or tribunal in every local area".³⁹ This view is based on the Government's plan to modernise HMCTS through increased use of technology. Shailesh Vara put the case as follows:

Access to justice in 21st-century Britain is different from what it has meant in centuries and decades before. Before, it meant proximity—the ability to go physically to a court, with all the majesty that goes with it—but the world has changed. People now work online. They do things from the comfort of their sitting room. People can now sit on a Saturday evening in the comfort of their armchair and, by use of their mobile phone, go online and

³³ T Bingham, 'The Rule of Law' Cambridge Law Journal 66 (1) (2007) p77

³⁴ *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department ex parte Daly* (2001) 2 WLR 1622 para 5

³⁵ [2013] EWCA Civ 34

³⁶ [2013] EWCA Civ 34 para 29

³⁷ [1998] QB 575

³⁸ *Golder v United Kingdom* (1979-90) 1 E.H.R.R. 524

³⁹ Ministry of Justice, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales' (2015) p7

plead guilty to low-level offences in a magistrate's court, such as low-level traffic offences or the avoidance of payment of a TV licence. Likewise, people will be able, by use of their mobile phones, to pay any fines that may be imposed.

In like manner, access to justice can mean that victims and witnesses, particularly those who are vulnerable, do not have to go to a court and experience all the stress that goes with that. They can go to a room in their locality and, through video conferencing, access a court located elsewhere. Solicitors and barristers no longer have to go to court and hang around for two or three hours to have a five or 10-minute hearing before a judge. They can arrange a telephone conference. Lawyers on both sides of the case can sit in the comfort of their offices and a judge can sit in the comfort of his chambers, and at a given time the three of them can teleconference. That is happening. That is access to justice without moving, from people's homes and offices.⁴⁰

Despite this, the Government and HMCTS recognised that users should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend court.⁴¹ In evidence to the Justice Committee, Michael Gove said:

What we have tried to do was to make sure that the time it will take for any citizen to travel to court remains less than one hour. One of the tests that we have set is that, even with the programme of court closures we are preparing, it will still be the case that will continue to apply.⁴²

Long or difficult journeys, especially those that might be expensive, could deter some from attending court, which could result in delays, or might put people off from bringing cases in the first place. The Law Society's [response to the consultation](#) stated that longer journey will 'have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable court users'.⁴³

Each consultation document sets out the impact on each closure upon court users' travel times. They do this by showing the percentage of users that will have to travel: 0-30 minutes, 30-60 minutes, 60-120 minutes and more than 120 minutes, before and after each closure. Although the consultation has not given itself a formal target for travel times, the Minister responsible, Shailesh Vara, refers to the fact that after the proposed changes '95% of citizens will be able to reach their required court within an hour by car'.⁴⁴ In the context of the CERP programme, the Government emphasised that the majority of users

⁴⁰ HC Deb 16 September 2015 c338WH

⁴¹ Ministry of Justice, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales' (2015) p7

⁴² Justice Committee, *The Work of the Secretary of State for Justice*, 17 July 2015, HC 335, p4

⁴³ The Law Society, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales – the Law Society Response', p2

⁴⁴ Ministry of Justice, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales' (2015) p5

should be able to access their local court within an hour by public transport.⁴⁵

Chart 1: Travel times



This chart illustrates the pattern of travel times to courts across England and Wales after the adoption of the proposed changes, taken from the MoJ’s regional consultations. For each current court the chart presents the proportion of the relevant population which is within 1 hour’s travel time by public transport. Two dots are shown where populations will be covered by more than one court. The Appendix shows the underlying data.

The Government has emphasised that attending court is “rare for most people”.⁴⁶ Where journeys could become extremely difficult, for example in rural areas, HMCTS will use alternative means, such as holding hearings in town halls.⁴⁷ The consultation documents emphasise the impact of closures on access to justice will be offset by the modernisation to the administration of courts and tribunals through increased use of technology.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ministry of Justice, Proposal on provision of court services in Greater Manchester (2010) HMCS CP09/10, p15

⁴⁶ Ministry of Justice, ‘Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales’ (2015) p5

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ministry of Justice, ‘Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales’ (2015) p10

The Law Society and certain MPs criticised the consultation documents for failing to adequately reflect the change in travel times resulting from the closures. The Law Society's response explained "the travel times given in the consultation paper represent the 'best case scenario'".⁴⁹ Further it claimed that the travel times given are from "court to court" and therefore do not take into account travel from the users home to the relevant town and then on to the court.⁵⁰ The response also reported that their membership indicated that the travel times are "misleading and do not take sufficient account of local geography or transport infrastructure".⁵¹ The Law Society also criticised the Ministry of Justice for failing to publish more details on the model used to calculate the travel times.⁵²

During a Backbench Business debate on court closures, held on 17 September, Ann Coffey MP said that the stated travel time of 15 minutes by train from Stockport to Manchester was "unrealistic", as it did not take into account the travel from home to Stockport station.⁵³ A number of MPs participating in the debate made similar points. In response, the Government Minister Shailesh Vara emphasised that they envisaged a reduction in the numbers of people required to physically attend court as a result of increased use of technology.⁵⁴

2.5 Delivering value for money

The consultations set out the operating costs of each of the courts to be closed in the financial year 2014/15. These range from as little as £18,000 for Carmarthen's Civil, Family, Tribunal and Probate Hearing Centre, to £879,000 for Stockport's Magistrates' Court and County Court. Shutting these courts will reduce the current and future running costs of the estate according to the Government's impact assessment.⁵⁵

The impact assessment also highlighted that the disposal of all of the freehold buildings that are freed up as a result of the closures are estimated to be worth £35 million.⁵⁶ The closures will also generate costs, including enabling works at the buildings receiving the cases of closed courts and disposal costs. Despite such costs, which over the five-year period are estimated at £51 million, the Government estimated

⁴⁹ The Law Society 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales – the Law Society Response' (October 2015) p3

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ The Law Society 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales – the Law Society Response' (October 2015) p10

⁵² The Law Society 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales – the Law Society Response' (October 2015) p9

⁵³ HC Deb 17 September 2015 c1273

⁵⁴ HC Deb 17 September 2015 c1295

⁵⁵ Ministry of Justice 'Impact Assessment on Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service proposals on the provision of courts services in England and Wales' (2015) p3

⁵⁶ Ministry of Justice 'Impact Assessment on Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service proposals on the provision of courts services in England and Wales' (2015) p9

a Net Present Value (NPV) of £200 million over that period.⁵⁷ The building costs savings alone are estimated to be £85 million.⁵⁸

2.6 Enabling efficiency in the longer term

Part of the Government's case for closures was that the HMCTS estate is inefficient, particularly because many of the court and tribunal buildings are under used, but also because many of them are in poor condition and ill-equipped for the planned modernisation and increased use of technology.⁵⁹

The utilisation level of a court was said by Government to be a contributing factor in deciding whether a court should be closed.⁶⁰ The utilisation level was worked out by evaluating the number of hours worked as a proportion of the maximum capacity of a court. The maximum capacity was determined by multiplying the number of courtrooms per court or tribunal by five hours per day and 248 working days in the year. Those listed for closure range from 2% for Accrington Magistrates' Court to 78% for Chichester Combined Court. This range would appear to show that despite its importance to the decision-process, it was not always a decisive factor.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Justice 'Impact Assessment on Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service proposals on the provision of courts services in England and Wales' (2015) p11

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ministry of Justice, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales' (2015) p9

⁶⁰ Ministry of Justice, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales' (2015) p9-12

Chart 2: Range of utilisation rates for courts and tribunals selected for closure

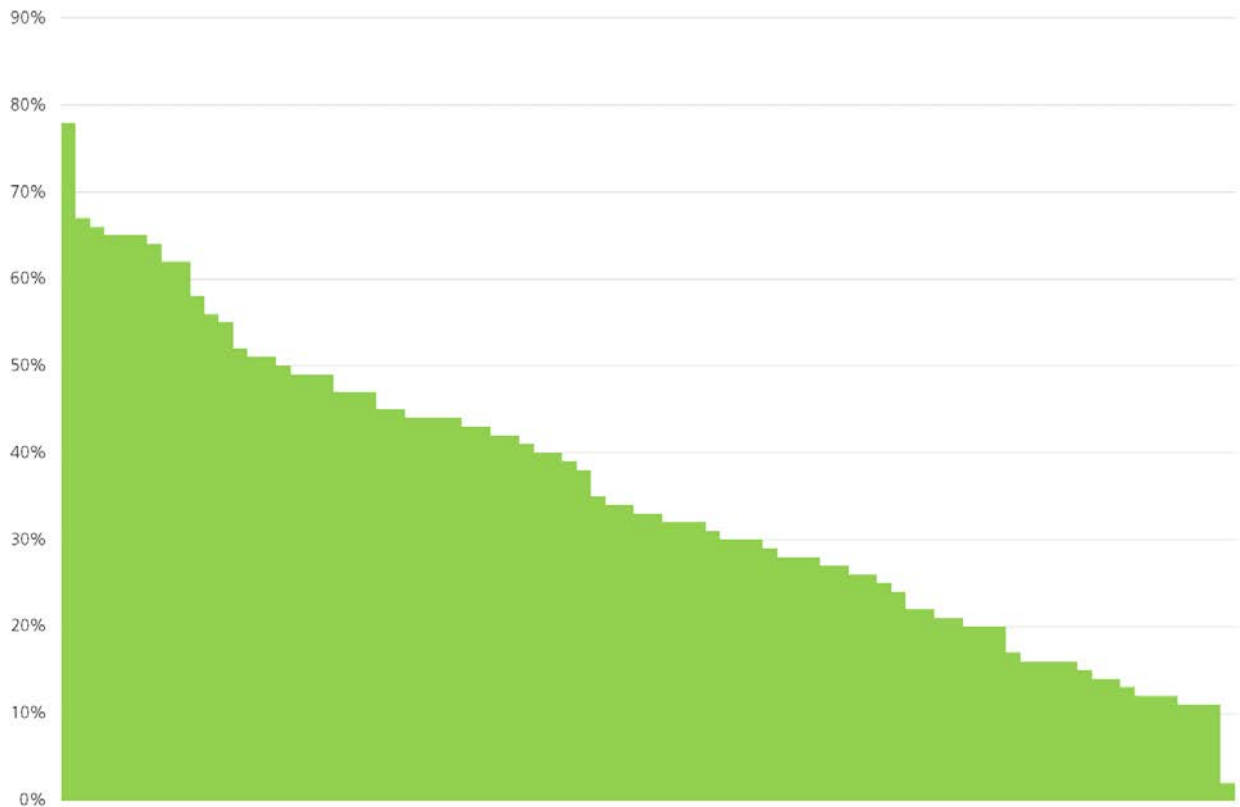


Chart 2 illustrates the pattern of court utilisation rates across the courts and tribunals selected for closure, taken from the MoJ's regional consultations. Ten courts had utilisation rates over 60%, while for 19 courts the utilisation rate was less than 20%. Figures for individual courts are shown in the Appendix.

There has been criticism of the focus on rates. For example, Iain Wright MP argued that the Government's use of rates to guide decision-making was unclear.⁶¹ He gave the example of Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court, which had a utilisation rate of 49% in 2014-15, which is above the England and Wales average of 46% for Magistrates' Court in the same period, but below the 50% rate which has been emphasised by Shailesh Vara, the Minister responsible. Marie Rimmer MP said that the utilisation rate of 62% for St Helens Magistrates' Court and County Court had been "seriously challenged".⁶² James Hand, Associate Senior Lecturer at the University of Portsmouth, criticised the

⁶¹ HC Deb 17 September 2015 c1279

⁶² HC Deb 17 September 2015 c1283

consultation for only giving the figure for 2014/15, and as a consequence not presenting a “full picture”.⁶³

The Law Society criticised the proposed closure of courts with above average utilisation rates:

Our members are concerned that this would result in slower, less efficient service at the alternative courts, longer waiting times for hearings and additional stress for court staff.⁶⁴

In September 2015, an article by Lawrence Cawley for BBC News on delays in the court system, reported that a senior Essex magistrate had cited court closures as a reason for the level of delays in the county.⁶⁵ The Law Society also raised concerns with how the rates were calculated, particularly where particular details of how court facilities are used were not taken into account.⁶⁶

The Law Society also reported that some of its membership had contested the accuracy of the descriptions of court facilities in the consultations.⁶⁷ During the Backbench business debate, Andrew Bingham MP also disputed the description of the facilities at Buxton Magistrates and County Court in the regional consultation document.⁶⁸ In response Shailesh Vara, the Minister responsible, indicated his willingness to correct any errors before any decisions are taken.⁶⁹

Another issue raised relating to efficiency of service, but also to access to justice, is the impact of the closures on local justice. The Government recognises that even when courts are closed, that where possible justice should be kept local to the community to which it relates. Michael Gove emphasised this point during evidence to the Justice Committee, when explaining the intention to hold hearings in town halls and other buildings.⁷⁰

During the Backbench business debate on the closures, Kevin Foster MP argued that the closures risk damaging local justice by disconnecting the justice system from the communities they serve, particularly in the context of magistrates courts dealing with minor offences⁷¹. Nic Dakin MP made a similar point, and argued that magistracy should ideally be

⁶³ J Hand, ‘Cutting the court – a comment on the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales’ UK Const. L. Blog (23 July 2015) (available at <http://ukconstitutionallaw.org/>)

⁶⁴ The Law Society ‘Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales – the Law Society Response’ (October 2015) p9

⁶⁵ L Cawley, ‘[Magistrates warning as court delays create ‘postcode lottery’](#)’, BBC News, 7 September 2011

⁶⁶ The Law Society ‘Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales – the Law Society Response’ (October 2015) p9

⁶⁷ The Law Society ‘Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales – the Law Society Response’ (October 2015) p10

⁶⁸ HC Deb 17 September 2015 c1275

⁶⁹ HC Deb 17 September 2015 c1293-94

⁷⁰ Justice Committee, The Work of the Secretary of State for Justice, 17 July 2015, HC 335 p5

⁷¹ HC Deb 17 September 2015 c1286

made up of people who live within the communities where they sit.⁷² Andrew Bingham MP also raised the point that the closures in his constituency would discourage individuals from certain communities becoming magistrates if the distances are too great.⁷³ Penelope Gibbs, director of Transform Justice, also raised similar concerns over how the closures could limit the influence of local communities on the work of magistrates' courts.⁷⁴

⁷² HC Deb 17 September 2015 c1284-86

⁷³ HC Deb 17 September 2015 c1277

⁷⁴ P Gibbs, 'Court closures who cares' The Justice Gap available at: <http://tehjusticegap.com/2015/07/court-closures-who-cares/>

3. The Court Estate Reform Programme 2010–2014

In June 2010, the Government announced a consultation on plans to close 103 magistrates' courts and 54 county courts in England and Wales. In December 2010, the Government announced that following the consultation 93 magistrates' courts and 49 county courts would be closed. In a statement to the House of Commons, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Jonathan Djanogly, said:

It is unsustainable that in 2009-10, our 330 magistrates courts sat for less than two-thirds of their available time and that courtrooms in our 219 county courts sat on average for only 180 days a year. It is unacceptable that dozens of buildings never intended, and not fit, for the requirements of a modern court system are still being used. It is undesirable in the current financial position that the taxpayer continues to fund buildings that offer outdated and inadequate facilities to victims and witnesses.⁷⁵

The stated aim of the closures was to produce a "better, more efficient and more modern justice system".⁷⁶ By closing old outdated courts, the Government stated that it would be able to focus on improving and updating existing courts. Greater use of technology, for example through use of video links for hearing evidence from police officers in police stations, would make the courts more efficient.

The Government's case for enhancing efficiency was in part based on improving utilisation rates (the percentage of time that a court is used when it is open). For example, the Government stated that the average utilisation rates in magistrates' courts was 64% in 2009/2010.⁷⁷ In July 2010, the Government set itself a target of achieving a rate of 80% in all courts.⁷⁸ By closing under-used courts, the Government aimed to increase the level of use in the rest of the facilities available.

The Government also emphasised that court closures were needed to save public money in order to reduce the deficit. When the closures were announced, Mr Djanogly said that they would "save £41.5 million during the spending review period (excluding closure costs), and bring in £38.5 million in receipts from the sale of assets".⁷⁹

⁷⁵ HC Deb 14 December 2010 col 816

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Jonathan Djanogly MP, PQ 6 July 2010, col 161W

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ HC Deb 14 December 2010 c816

Each regional consultation document set out the guiding principles that inform the Court Estates Reform Programme:

- improve utilisation to at least 80%;
- provide greater flexibility through co-location of criminal courts and civil courts with tribunal hearing centres;
- plan on a long term basis;
- integrate developing policy and operational changes into estates planning;
- ensure access to courts – enabling the majority of the public to be within a 60 minute commute of their nearest court by public transport;
- ensure the estate supports the challenges of rural access;
- wherever possible centralise back office functions;
- have specialist facilities in large strategic locations only;
- move towards larger courts;
- maintain properties at an appropriate level; and
- share facilities with the Tribunal Service.⁸⁰

The consultation indicated that travel times should not be the “sole or primary concern”. It is more important for access to justice, according to the consultation, for the courts to be efficient and to provide a good quality service.

An important factor in making the final decisions on closures was the location of spare capacity. A good example of this was the decision to close Rochdale, Middleton and Heywood Magistrates’ Court. This Court had a high utilisation rate (78.8%) and good facilities, but because it could not accommodate the work of another neighbouring court, it was closed and transferred to Bury Magistrates’ Court.⁸¹

One of the most significant consultation responses came from Lord Justice Goldring, who was then the Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales.⁸² He raised a number of criticisms of the consultation papers, including: the method used to calculate travel times,⁸³ the potential impact of an 80% utilisation rate target on delays,⁸⁴ the failure

⁸⁰ Ministry of Justice, Proposal on the provision of court services in Greater Manchester, (CP HMCS CP09/10) June 2010, p3

⁸¹ Ministry of Justice, Proposal on the provision of court services in Greater Manchester, (CP HMCS CP09/10) December 2010, p27

⁸² Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales, Response from the Senior Presiding Judge of England and Wales, Proposals on the Provision of Court Services in England and Wales (October 2010)

⁸³ Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales, Response from the Senior Presiding Judge of England and Wales, Proposals on the Provision of Court Services in England and Wales (October 2010) p6-7

⁸⁴ Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales, Response from the Senior Presiding Judge of England and Wales, Proposals on the Provision of Court Services in England and Wales (October 2010) p7

to take account the costs of closures upon the overall savings,⁸⁵ and the potential impact on the recruitment and morale of magistrates.⁸⁶

There were 16 separate regional consultations. The final decisions were made by the Lord Chancellor. As noted above, after the consultation responses were received, 15 courts, out of the 157 closures consulted upon, were kept open. The closure programme ended in September 2014.

In 2011, the Administrative Court heard a challenge to the decision to close Barry Magistrates Court: *The Vale of Glamorgan Council v The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice*.⁸⁷ The judicial review challenge was based on a range of grounds, including that the Lord Chancellor gave inadequate reasons for the decision, and that the Lord Chancellor had failed to consider relevant considerations. The Court decided that none of the grounds raised amounted to an error of law and so the application failed.

In September 2014, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Shailesh Vara, explained that the closures had saved an estimated £152 million since 2010.⁸⁸ In November 2014, Shailesh Vara reported that the sale of assets under the programme had generated receipts of just under £43 million.⁸⁹

In February 2015, Minister of State, Lord Faulks said:

The total cumulative gross benefits expected from CERP is an estimated £152m over the SR10 period. At the end of June 2014, approximately £140m had been realised through resource savings of approximately £98m and gross capital proceeds of £42m.

There are 32 closed courts currently not in use. Of these, 27 were closed between May 2010 and March 2013 as part of CERP and business as usual closures. The full year cost of maintaining these courts in 2013/14 was £942,162. A further five courts were closed since then. The cost of maintaining these courts since their closure to date has been £122,444. All closed courts are being prepared for or undergoing sale processes.

In July 2015, the Government stated that 146 courts had been closed since May 2010.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales, Response from the Senior Presiding Judge of England and Wales, Proposals on the Provision of Court Services in England and Wales (October 2010) p8

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ [2011] EWHC 1532 (Admin)

⁸⁸ HC Deb 9 September 2014 c753

⁸⁹ HC Deb 18 November 2014 c251

⁹⁰ HL Deb 8 July 2015 c770

Appendix

Courts and Tribunals selected for closure by region (February 2016)

Region	Court Name
London	Bow County Court
	Feltham Magistrates' Court
	Greenwich Magistrates' Court
	Hammersmith County Court (formerly West London County Court)
	Lambeth County Court
	Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre
	Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court
	Tottenham Magistrates' Court
	Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court
Woolwich County Court	
Midlands	Birmingham Youth Court
	Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court
	Buxton Magistrates' and County Court
	Corby Magistrates' Court
	Grantham Magistrates' Court
	Hinckley Magistrates' Court
	Kettering County Court
	Kettering Magistrates' Court
	Sandwell Magistrates' Court
	Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court
	Skegness Magistrates' Court
	Solihull Magistrates' Court
	Stafford Magistrates' Court
Worksop Magistrates' Court	
North East	Consett Magistrates' Court
	Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' and Family Court
	Halifax County Court and Family Court
	Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court
	Morpeth County Court
	Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court
	Scunthorpe Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court
Wakefield Magistrates' Court	
North West	Accrington County Court
	Accrington Magistrates' Court
	Bolton County Court and Family Court
	Bury Magistrates' Court and County Court
	Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court
	Macclesfield County Court
	Macclesfield Magistrates' Court
	Oldham County Court
	Oldham Magistrates' Court
	Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court
	Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court
	St Helens Magistrates' Court
	Tameside County Court
Trafford Magistrates' Court and Altrincham County Court	
Warrington County Court	

South East	<p>Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court Basildon Social Security and Child Support Tribunal (Acorn House) Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bedford County Court and Family Court Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court Bury St. Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bury St. Edmunds Crown Court Chichester Combined Court (Crown and County) Chichester Magistrates' Court Colchester County Court and Family Court Colchester County Court Offices Dartford Magistrates' Court Dover Magistrates' Court Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court Harlow Magistrates' Court Kings Lynn County Court and Family Court Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court Redhill Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Reigate County Court and Family Court St Albans County Court Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court</p>
South West	<p>Barnstaple Crown Court Bournemouth Magistrates' Court Cheltenham Rivershill House Tribunal Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court Dorchester Crown Court Fareham Magistrates' Court Gloucester Magistrates' Court North Avon (Yate) Magistrates' Court or Bath Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court Stroud Magistrates' Court Torquay Magistrates' Court</p>
Wales	<p>Brecon Law Courts Bridgend Law Courts Carmarthen Law Courts (The Guildhall) Dolgellau Crown and Magistrates' Court Holyhead Magistrates' Court Llangefni Civil and Family Court Neath and Port Talbot Civil and Family Court Pontypridd Magistrates' Court Prestatyn Magistrates' Court Wrexham Tribunal (Rhyd Broughton)</p>

Source: Ministry of Justice, *Response to the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales*, 2016

Courts closed May 2010 to July 8 2015

Aberdare County Court
Aberdare Magistrates' Court
Abertillery Magistrates' Court
Acton Magistrates' Court
Alnwick Magistrates' Court
Alton Magistrates' Court
Amersham Magistrates' Court
Ammanford Magistrates' Court
Andover Magistrates' Court
Ashford County Court
Ashford Magistrates' Court
Balham Youth Court
Batley and Dewsbury Magistrates' Court
Barking and Dagenham Magistrates' Court
Barry Magistrates' Court
Bingley (Keighley) Magistrates' Court
Bishop Auckland County Court
Bishop Auckland Magistrates' Court
Blandford Forum Magistrates' Court
Blaydon Magistrates' Court
Bracknell Magistrates' Court
Brentford Magistrates' Court
Bridgwater Magistrates' Court
Burton-upon-Trent County Court
Camborne Magistrates' Court
Cardigan Magistrates' Court
Cheltenham County Court
Chepstow County Court
Chepstow Magistrates' Court
Chorley County Court
Cirencester Magistrates' Court
Coalville Magistrates' Court
Coleford Magistrates' Court
Consett County Court
Cromer Magistrates' Court
Daventry Magistrates' Court
Denbigh Magistrates' Court
Dewsbury County Court
Didcot Magistrates' Court
Ely Magistrates' Court
Epping Magistrates' Court
Epsom County Court
Epsom Magistrates' Court
Evesham County Court
Flint Magistrates' Court
Frome Magistrates' Court
Goole County Court
Goole Magistrates' Court
Gosforth Magistrates' Court
Grantham County Court
Gravesend County Court
Grays Magistrates' Court
Guisborough (East Langbaugh) Magistrates' Court
Halesowen Magistrates' Court
Haringey Magistrates' Court (Highgate)
Harlow County Court
Harrow Magistrates' Court
Haywards Heath County Court
Hemel Hempstead Magistrates' Court

Hitchin County Court
Honiton Magistrates' Court
Houghton Le Spring Magistrates' Court
Huntingdon County Court
Ilford County Court
Ilkeston Magistrates' Court
Keighley County Court
Kidderminster County Court
Kingston-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court
Knowsley Magistrates' Court
Knustford Crown Court
Lewes Magistrates' Court
Liskeard Magistrates' Court
Llandovery Magistrates' Court
Llangefni Magistrates' Court
Llwynypia Magistrates' Court
Lowestoft County Court
Ludlow County Court
Ludlow Magistrates' Court
Lyndhurst Magistrates' Court
Market Drayton Magistrates' Court
Market Harborough Magistrates' Court
Melton Mowbray County Court
Melton Mowbray Magistrates' Court
Mid-Sussex (Haywards Heath) Magistrates' Court
Neath Magistrates' Court
Newark County Court
Newark Magistrates' Court
Newbury County Court
North Liverpool Community Justice Centre
Northwich County Court
Northwich Magistrates' Court
Oswestry County Court
Oswestry Magistrates' Court
Penrith County Court
Penrith Magistrates' Court
Penzance County Court
Penzance Magistrates' Court
Pontefract County Court
Pontefract Magistrates' Court
Pontypool County Court
Poole County Court
Pwllheli Magistrates' Court
Rawtenstall County Court
Rawtenstall Magistrates' Court
Redditch County Court
Retford Magistrates' Court
Rochdale Magistrates' Court
Rugby County Court
Rugby Magistrates' Court
Runcorn County Court
Rutland Magistrates' Court
Salford County Court
Salford Magistrates' Court
Selby Magistrates' Court
Shrewsbury County Court
Sittingbourne Magistrates' Court
Skegness County Court
Southport County Court

27 Court and tribunal closures

Southport (North Sefton) Magistrates' Court
Spalding Magistrates' Court
Stoke On Trent Magistrates' Court
Stourbridge County Court
Stratford-Upon-Avon County Court
Sudbury Magistrates' Court
Sutton Coldfield Magistrates' Court
Sutton Magistrates' Court
Swaffham Magistrates' Court
Tamworth County Court
Tamworth Magistrates' Court
Thetford Magistrates' Court
Totnes Magistrates' Court
Towcester Magistrates' Court
Tower Bridge Magistrates' Court
Trowbridge County Court
Tynedale (Hexham) Magistrates' Court
Wantage Magistrates' Court
Wellingborough County Court
West Bromwich Magistrates' Court
Whitehaven County Court
Whitehaven Magistrates' Court
Wimborne Magistrates' Court
Wisbech Magistrates' Court
Witney Magistrates' Court
Woking Magistrates' Court
Woolwich Magistrates' Court
Worksop County Court

Source: MoJ

Travel time statistics for individual courts

Court Name	Region	Percentage that will be able to reach court by car in under 1 hour	Percentage that will be able to reach court by public transport in under one hour
Hammersmith County Court (formerly West London County Court)	London	99%	100%
Lambeth County Court	London	100%	98%
Greenwich Magistrates' Court	London	100%	94%
Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre	London	100%	94%
Accrington County Court	North West	100%	94%
Solihull Magistrates' Court	Midlands	100%	93%
Stafford Magistrates' Court	Midlands	100%	88%
Bolton County Court and Family Court	North West	100%	88%
Bow County Court	London	100%	86%
Halifax County Court and Family Court	North East	98%	83%
Accrington Magistrates' Court	North West	100%	83%
Tameside County Court	North West	100%	82%
Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' and Family Court	North East	98%	79%
Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court	London	100%	77%
Tottenham Magistrates' Court	London	100%	76%
Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court	Midlands	100%	76%
Sandwell Magistrates' Court	Midlands	100%	76%
Neath and Port Talbot Civil and Family Court	Wales	100%	73%
Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court	North West	100%	70%
Harlow Magistrates' Court	South East	99%	65%
Oldham County Court	North West	100%	60%
Feltham Magistrates' Court	London	100%	57%
Hinckley Magistrates' Court	Midlands	100%	55%
Wakefield Magistrates' Court	North East	100%	53%
Bournemouth Magistrates' Court	South West	100%	47%
North Avon (Yate) Magistrates' Court or Bath Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	South West	100%	40%
Fareham Magistrates' Court	South West	100%	39%
Oldham Magistrates' Court	North West	100%	36%
St Albans County Court	South East	100%	34%
Woolwich County Court	London	100%	33%
Prestatyn Magistrates' Court	Wales	100%	33%
Gloucester Magistrates' Court	South West	99%	32%
Llangefni Civil and Family Court	Wales	100%	30%

29 Court and tribunal closures

Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court	London	100%	28%
Warrington County Court	North West	100%	25%
Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court	South West	99%	22%
Wrexham Tribunal (Rhyd Broughton)	Wales	55%	21%
Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court	South East	99%	18%
West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court	South East	100%	15%
Dartford Magistrates' Court	South East	100%	13%
Corby Magistrates' Court	Midlands	94%	12%
Kettering County Court	Midlands	79%	12%
Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court	Midlands	99%	12%
Morpeth County Court	North East	83%	12%
Macclesfield Magistrates' Court	North West	100%	12%
Basildon Social Security and Child Support Tribunal (Acorn House)	South East	65%	12%
Colchester County Court and Family Court	South East	98%	11%
Colchester County Court Offices	South East	98%	11%
Worksop Magistrates' Court	Midlands	91%	10%
Macclesfield County Court	North West	100%	9%
Stroud Magistrates' Court	South West	98%	9%
Grantham Magistrates' Court	Midlands	96%	6%
Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court	South East	100%	5%
Skegness Magistrates' Court	Midlands	56%	3%
Kettering Magistrates' Court	Midlands	100%	2%
Buxton Magistrates' and County Court	Midlands	59%	0%
Kings Lynn County Court and Family Court	South East	62%	0%
Barnstaple Crown Court	South West	6%	0%
Cheltenham Rivershill House Tribunal	South West	56%	0%
Dorchester Crown Court	South West	57%	0%
Dolgellau Crown and Magistrates' Court	Wales	15%	0%
Birmingham Youth Court	Midlands	n/a	n/a
St Helens Magistrates' Court	North West	n/a	n/a
Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court	South East	100%	80%/83%
Trafford Magistrates' Court and Altrincham County Court	North West	100%	80%/79%
Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bedford County Court	South East	100%	74%/74%/73%
Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court	North East	100%	7%/7%/5%
Bridgend Law Courts	Wales	100%	65%/67%/64%
Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	North East	100%	64%/64%/65%

Pontypridd Magistrates' Court	Wales	100%	56%/80%
Bury Magistrates' Court and County Court	North West	99%	39%/39%
Brecon Law Courts	Wales	100%	34%/33%/24%
Dover Magistrates' Court	South East	100%	32%/32%
Carmarthen Law Courts (The Guildhall)	Wales	84%/57%/72%	31%/6%/32%
Bury St. Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bury St. Edmunds Crown Court	South East	78%/76%	3%/3%
Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court	North West	79%/78%	29%/24%
Chichester Combined Court (Crown and County)	South East	100%/99%	29%/19%
Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	South East	100%	20%/20%/22%
Chichester Magistrates' Court	South East	97%	19%/19%
Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	South East	100%	17%/17%
Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	South East	100%	13%/47%/13%
Consett Magistrates' Court	North East	90%	12%/12%
Redhill Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Reigate County Court and Family Court	South East	93%/83%	10%/8%
Torquay Magistrates' Court	South West	99%/98%	0%/60%
Scunthorpe Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	North East	77%/76%	0%/0%
Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court	North West	49%	0%/0%
Holyhead Magistrates' Court	Wales	100%	0%/0%

Source: Ministry of Justice

Note: Travel time estimates were made before the consultation response, i.e. when 91 courts were being considered for closure. Decisions made in the consultation response may affect some travel times. In some cases, multiple travel time estimates have been made for each of the court's workloads (i.e. Crown, Magistrates' and/or Family).

Utilisation, accommodation adequacy and annual cost statistics for individual courts

Court Name	Region	Utilisation rate 2014/2015	Is accommodation adequate?	Estimated yearly cost of court
Solihull Magistrates' Court	Midlands	n/a	No	£247,000
St Helens Magistrates' Court	North West	n/a	n/a	n/a
Harlow Magistrates' Court	South East	n/a	Yes	£102,000
Barnstaple Crown Court	South West	n/a	No	n/a
Accrington County Court	North West	2 days a month	Yes	£123,000
Chichester Combined Court (Crown and County)	South East	78%	Yes	£274,000
Dorchester Crown Court	South West	67%	Yes	£319,000
Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court	North West	66%	Yes	£349,000
Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court	London	65%	No	£203,000
Warrington County Court	North West	65%	Yes	£494,000
St Albans County Court	South East	65%	Yes	£751,000
Kettering Magistrates' Court	Midlands	64%	Yes	£82,000
Hammersmith County Court (formerly West London County Court)	London	62%	Yes	n/a
Torquay Magistrates' Court	South West	62%	No	£106,000
Colchester County Court and Family Court	South East	58%	Yes	£159,000
Wakefield Magistrates' Court	North East	56%	No	£268,000
Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court	South East	55%	No	£315,000
Bournemouth Magistrates' Court	South West	52%	No	£382,000
Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court	Midlands	51%	Yes	£196,000
Bury Magistrates' Court and County Court	North West	51%	Yes	£528,000
Bridgend Law Courts	Wales	50%	Yes	£347,000
Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre	London	49%	Yes	£434,000
Bolton County Court and Family Court	North West	49%	Yes	£666,000
Redhill Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Reigate County Court and Family Court	South East	49%	Yes	£477,000
Bow County Court	London	47%	No	£357,000
Sandwell Magistrates' Court	Midlands	47%	Yes	£407,000
Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court	North East	47%	Yes	£345,000
Feltham Magistrates' Court	London	45%	No	£230,000
Macclesfield County Court	North West	45%	Yes	£275,000
Morpeth County Court	North East	44%	Yes	£255,000
Macclesfield Magistrates' Court	North West	44%	Yes	£120,000
Tameside County Court	North West	44%	Yes	£566,000
Bury St. Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bury St. Edmunds Crown Court	South East	44%	No	£272,000
Fareham Magistrates' Court	South West	43%	No	£280,000
Pontypridd Magistrates' Court	Wales	43%	Yes	£250,000

Basildon Social Security and Child Support Tribunal (Acorn House)	South East	42%	No	£166,000
Neath and Port Talbot Civil and Family Court	Wales	42%	Yes	£276,000
Chichester Magistrates' Court	South East	41%	Yes	£438,000
Woolwich County Court	London	40%	Yes	£163,000
Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court	South West	40%	Yes	£289,000
Lambeth County Court	London	39%	No	£286,000
Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	South East	38%	Yes	£260,000
Birmingham Youth Court	Midlands	35%	Yes	£245,000
Worksop Magistrates' Court	Midlands	34%	No	£145,000
Kings Lynn County Court and Family Court	South East	34%	Yes	£301,000
Corby Magistrates' Court	Midlands	33%	Yes	£80,000
Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' and Family Court	North East	33%	No	£380,000
Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court	London	32%	No	£355,000
Rotherham Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	North East	32%	Yes	£640,000
Stroud Magistrates' Court	South West	32%	No	£132,000
Llangefni Civil and Family Court	Wales	31%	Yes	£115,000
Scunthorpe Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	North East	30%	Yes	£268,000
Dartford Magistrates' Court	South East	30%	Yes	£213,000
Prestatyn Magistrates' Court	Wales	30%	Yes	£168,000
Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court	North West	29%	No	£144,000
Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court	Midlands	28%	Yes	£287,000
Oldham Magistrates' Court	North West	28%	Yes	£418,000
North Avon (Yate) Magistrates' Court or Bath Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	South West	28%	Yes	£286,000
Buxton Magistrates' and County Court	Midlands	27%	Yes	£89,000
Trafford Magistrates' Court and Altrincham County Court	North West	27%	Yes	£589,000
Colchester County Court Offices	South East	26%	Yes	n/a
Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	South East	26%	Yes	£348,000
Consett Magistrates' Court	North East	25%	No	£174,000
Grantham Magistrates' Court	Midlands	24%	Yes	£237,000
Tottenham Magistrates' Court	London	22%	No	£337,000
Halifax County Court and Family Court	North East	22%	No	£115,000
Hinckley Magistrates' Court	Midlands	21%	Yes	£240,000
Cheltenham Rivershill House Tribunal	South West	21%	No	£126,000
Kettering County Court	Midlands	20%	Yes	£104,000
Skegness Magistrates' Court	Midlands	20%	Yes	£198,000
Holyhead Magistrates' Court	Wales	20%	No	£84,000
Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court	South East	17%	Yes	£463,000
Stafford Magistrates' Court	Midlands	16%	No	£213,000
Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bedford County Court and Family Court	South East	16%	No	£425,000

33 Court and tribunal closures

Gloucester Magistrates' Court	South West	16%	Yes	£195,000
Brecon Law Courts	Wales	16%	Yes	£164,000
Dover Magistrates' Court	South East	15%	Yes	£347,000
Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court	South East	14%	Yes	£237,000
Dolgellau Crown and Magistrates' Court	Wales	14%	No	£56,000
Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court	North West	13%	Yes	£241,000
Greenwich Magistrates' Court	London	12%	No	£332,000
Oldham County Court	North West	12%	Yes	£666,000
Wrexham Tribunal (Rhyd Broughton)	Wales	12%	Yes	£195,000
Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court	South East	11%	Yes	£58,000
West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court	South East	11%	Yes	£155,000
Carmarthen Law Courts (The Guildhall)	Wales	11%	Yes	£160,000
Accrington Magistrates' Court	North West	2%	Yes	£80,000

Source: Ministry of Justice, *Response to the proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales*, 2016

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