

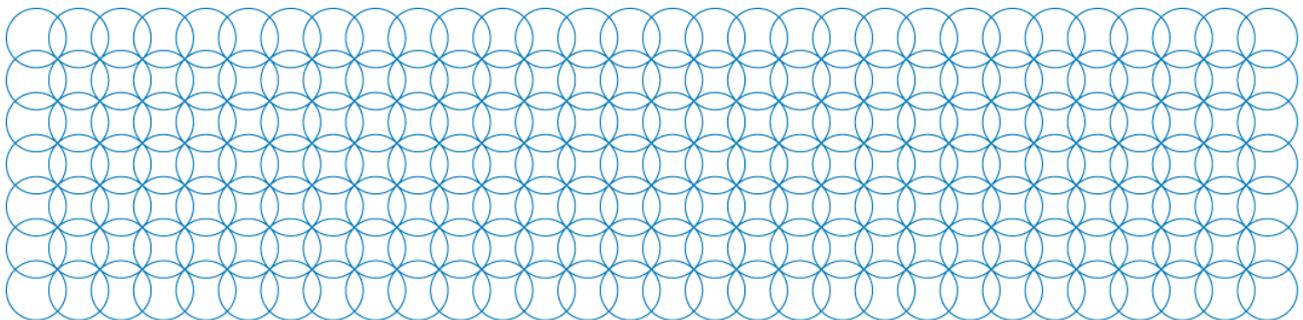


Ministry
of Justice

Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the North West region

This consultation begins on 16 July 2015

This consultation ends on 8 October 2015





Ministry
of Justice

Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the North West region

**A consultation produced by the Ministry of Justice. It is also available at
<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/>**

About this consultation

To: This consultation is aimed at court users, partners, judiciary, staff and other parties with an interest in the provision of local justice arrangements in the North West region.

Duration: From 16/07/15 to 08/10/15

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Additional ways to feed in your views: For further information please use the “Enquiries” contact details above.

Response paper: A response to this consultation exercise is due to be published at: <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/>

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Foreword

HM Courts and Tribunals Service is committed to working with the judiciary to reform our services so they better meet the needs of the public in the modern age. Considerable investment will enable us to transform how justice is delivered, creating a modern, efficient service. Taking this opportunity, however, will require challenging decisions about the current system. One such decision relates to the courts and tribunals estate.

I am responsible for managing the operations of HM Courts & Tribunals Service in the North West region, and I have reviewed the court and tribunal estate against the estates principles set out in the national consultation. I have identified buildings where I believe our ability to deliver an efficient service has been compromised by poor facilities, where usage is low and where the building does not provide appropriate value for the public money spent on it.

I have carefully considered the impact of the proposed changes – both locally and across the North West. This consultation is an opportunity for the public to use their knowledge of their local areas to review and help us with our proposals.

Of course, staff would be affected by these proposed changes. Although the impact will be limited, I will make sure this is managed properly. Any transition to new arrangements will take place in a fair and transparent manner in consultation with the Departmental Trade Union.

I understand that these proposals could result in some people having longer journeys to the courts and tribunals. I appreciate that there are particular challenges accessing public services in some parts of the North West – in, for example, Cumbria.

I am committed to working with rural communities to provide alternative ways for the public to access the justice system. These could include the use of civic or other public buildings for occasional hearings, video links or telephone or paper hearings to avoid travel altogether. In my region we have already established these facilities at the Virtual Court in Cheshire enabling defendants to have initial hearings over video link. It is vital we understand the demand for alternative provision as we plan services for the future.

I am keen to hear people's views on the different ways they would like to interact with their courts and tribunals, particularly from those in rural communities. It is important we understand the demand for these different methods as we plan provision for the future.

Thank you for considering this consultation.

Gill Hague

**Delivery Director
HM Courts & Tribunals Service North West**

Introduction

This consultation for the North West is part of a national consultation on the future of the court and tribunal estate in England and Wales. The national consultation document provides important information about the reform of courts and tribunals and how we have decided which buildings to consult on. It also includes a full list of the courts and tribunals we are consulting on and our other plans to integrate courts into existing buildings within a local area.

You should make sure you read the national consultation document alongside this.

The national consultation sets out:

- the requirement for changes to the estate;
- the utilisation levels across the estate;
- the accompanying Impact Assessment; and
- implications for local justice areas and listing changes.

Responses to questions in both the national consultation and this consultation are welcome but need not be duplicated.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service

HM Courts & Tribunals Service is an agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). It is responsible for the administration of the criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales¹ and non-devolved tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It operates as a partnership between the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals.

In March 2014, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales and the Senior President of Tribunals announced details of a programme of reform for the courts and tribunals. This will improve the court and tribunal estate, deliver greater use of technology, modernise practices and processes, and improve services for our users.

At the heart of this programme are the use of technology and the principle of proportionality. Straightforward, transactional matters (such as the administration of probate or pleading guilty and paying a fine) can be dealt with using digital technology to make the processes as straightforward as filing a tax return, or renewing car tax online. Straightforward cases do not necessarily need face to face hearings; judges will be able to reserve the full proceedings of a court hearing for the more sensitive or complex cases. Modern technology can be used not just to make the justice system more accessible but also to reduce the costs of the whole justice system by not requiring extensive transportation of prisoners for bail hearings, or the police to take full days off their priority work to sit in a court room.

¹ Some tribunals which are part of HMCTS in England are devolved to the Welsh Government in Wales.

Ahead of full implementation of the reform programme, we are seeking views on the closure of courts and tribunals which we believe do not meet our ideas of how best to deliver justice in the future.

Access to justice

We recognise that the public should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend hearings at courts and tribunals. We also know, however, that in an increasingly digital age, the public expect to be able to engage with any service through a variety of channels, and many prefer to do that digitally. They do not always want or need to attend hearings in person. Delivering effective access to justice does not necessarily mean providing access to a building. This challenges the assumption that there needs to be a court or tribunal in every local area.

We already have well established alternative ways that users can access the justice system. There are examples of this: enabling police officers to give evidence over a live link, processes to enable victims, witnesses and defendants to attend hearings over video link, and users in some jurisdictions having cases progressed or considered through telephone hearings or on papers, meaning that they do not need to attend a hearing in person at all. Where attendance at a hearing is needed other civic or public buildings could be used for hearings where security requirements are low.

These types of alternative provision could be particularly useful in rural communities and/or areas with limited public transport, for example, Cumbria. We are very keen to hear views on alternative provision, for example video link in civic or other public buildings.

Deciding which courts to include in the proposals

In order to achieve a radical transformation of the justice system, any investment must be targeted and sequenced across all three key areas of ICT, estates and business processes to create the efficiencies that will allow HMCTS to modernise its current practices and to adopt more streamlined ways of working. We are therefore, as a first priority, addressing the current surplus capacity within the HMCTS estate. This will enable us to use the remaining estate more intelligently and flexibly, to reduce our running costs, to focus our investment on improving the estate we need for the future and to increase the multifunctional court space – allowing different court and tribunal jurisdictions to share locations. The intention is that capital receipts from the sale of any surplus assets would be reinvested as part of the funding for the reform programme.

To ensure we deliver business effectively and meet our future strategic requirements, HM Courts & Tribunals Service has applied a set of principles against which the proposals in this consultation were developed.

The principles are:

Ensuring Access to Justice

- To ensure continued access to justice when assessing the impact of possible closures on both professional and lay court and tribunal users, taking into account journey times for users, the challenges of rural access and any mitigating action, including having facilities at local civic centres and other buildings to ensure local access, modern ICT and more flexible listing, when journeys will be significantly increased.

- To take into account the needs of users and in particular, victims, witnesses and those who are vulnerable.
- To support the requirements of other agencies such as the Crown Prosecution Service, Social Services, Police Forces and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS).

Delivering Value for Money

- To reduce the current and future cost of running the estate.
- To maximise the capital receipts from surplus estate for reinvestment in HM Courts & Tribunals Service.

Enabling Efficiency in the longer term

- To reduce the reliance on buildings with poor facilities and to remove from the estate buildings that are difficult and expensive either to improve or to upgrade.
- To move towards an estate with buildings which are larger and facilitate the more efficient and flexible listing of court and tribunal business whilst also giving users more certainty when their cases will be heard.
- To increase the ability to use the estate flexibly across the criminal jurisdiction and separately across the Civil, Family and Tribunal (CFT) jurisdictions.
- To move towards an estate that provides dedicated hearing centres, seeking opportunities to concentrate back office function where they can be carried out most efficiently.
- To improve the efficient use of the estate by seeking to improve whole system efficiency, taking advantage of modernised communication methods (wi-fi and video links) and adopting business processes to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- To increase the efficient use of the estate wherever possible irrespective of current administrative boundaries.

Responding to the consultation

We are keen to obtain views on the proposals to change the provision of court and tribunal estate and how we can make sure the public can still access the justice system. We have committed to consider each response. The responses will help us make sure that the courts and tribunals are based where the work is and that communities can access the justice system and that cases are heard in buildings with suitable facilities.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office. It will run for 12 weeks.

This consultation and the consultation stage Impact Assessment are also available at www.justice.gov.uk.

The proposals

Having considered the estate in the North West region against the principles set out in the 'Introduction' section, we recommend the closure of 14 buildings. In addition we are proposing to close three courts (Bolton County Court and Family Court, Tameside County Court and Warrington County Court), but not the actual building.

This consultation proposes the closure of the following courts² and tribunals:

- 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 and County Court
- Stockport Magistrates' Court and County Court
- Tameside County Court
- Trafford Magistrates' Court and Altrincham County Court
- Warrington County Court
- West Cumbria Magistrates' Court and County Court

In addition, there are three integrations set out below.

² Reference in this document to magistrates' courts, county courts, crown courts and combined courts refers to buildings (a singular structure providing the physical hearing rooms for criminal, civil, family and tribunal cases) which house that activity in a particular location. Strictly, legislation provides that there is a single crown court, county court and family court.

Travel times

As part of our work to assess the impact of these proposals on the public, we have included information on the distance by road between the court proposed for closure and the court where the work would transfer. There are also details of public transport costs and journey times which are provided as a guide only and are subject to change. This information does not illustrate the potential impact on travel times for the public in the catchment area of the court. We have developed a model to analyse this.

The model analyses the current catchment area of the court and the population within it, calculated to the smallest geographical area available with current national statistics (known as a Lower Super Output Area or LSOA). The model then calculates the travel time from the centre of each LSOA to the current court separately by car and public transport and then calculates the proportion of the population who could travel to court in set time bands. The model then calculates new journey times based on the location of the court where the work would be heard should the court close. These travel times are displayed in a table format within each site proposal

Due to the nature of the rural areas of the North West, we are and will continue to be flexible where people have trouble attending a court or tribunal for a particular time due to the availability of transport. By their nature, such requests would be considered through representations made on a case-by-case basis.

Integrations

To provide users with an overview of all proposed change to the estate, the consultation also includes information on where we plan to integrate courts within the same town or city. Local stakeholders will be notified of these changes when they take place.

An integration is when HM Courts & Tribunals Service moves work to allow jurisdictions to operate from fewer locations in a local area. This allows the closure of a building or buildings while retaining local jurisdictions, with a limited impact on service provision. Integrations are managed by HM Courts & Tribunals Service operational leads as part of the normal running of the business. These have been identified using the principles set out in the 'Introduction.' The proposals for closures in the region should be considered in the context of these integrations.

In addition to the proposed closures in this consultation the following integrations will be taking place in the North West region:

Bolton Magistrates' Court to be integrated within Bolton Combined Court

This integration is dependent on the closure of Bolton County Court to provide the space for this move. This location will establish a single crime centre for crown court and magistrates' court work in Bolton.

Lancaster County Court to be integrated within Lancaster Magistrates' Court

Lancaster Magistrates' Court is a relatively modern building with good facilities. This integration will provide increased flexibility and efficiency and allow improved utilisation of the court and tribunal estate.

Warrington Magistrates' Court to be integrated within Warrington Combined Court

This relocation will enable work to be administered in a single venue and allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases. This integration is dependent on the closure of Warrington County Court to provide space for this move and is linked to the proposals for Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court.

Accrington County Court

Proposal

Accrington County Court is one of six county courts in Lancashire and deals with civil work.

It is proposed that Accrington County Court is closed and the workload is moved to Burnley Combined Court. Accrington County Court occupies accommodation in a 1960s office block. Facilities are generally in a poor state of repair and do not meet the minimum standards required by the Equality Act 2010. No enabling works would be required at Burnley Combined Court to accommodate the judiciary and staff from Accrington. A limited counter appointment service currently operates at Accrington on the days the court is open.

Accrington County Court is administered from Burnley Combined Court. It has very low courtroom utilisation and sits on average two days per month.

Should Accrington County Court close it will enable the work to be moved to a purpose built venue with good facilities for users and allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

Accommodation

Accrington County Court occupies accommodation in a three storey, 1960's office block with the county court currently occupying the whole of the first floor plus two rooms on the ground floor. The accommodation comprises of general offices, district judges' chambers, a small waiting area, conference rooms and public toilets.

This site has two judicial hearing rooms located on different floors which are both serviced by one waiting area located on the first floor. The courthouse does not meet the minimum standards required by the Equality Act 2010 and security at the court is problematic due to the layout of the accommodation. The building is generally in a poor condition and does not provide adequate accommodation for court users, staff and judiciary.

Burnley Combined Court offers an improved level of accommodation for court users, judiciary and staff in a relatively modern building which was purpose built for county court use.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Accrington County Court had very low courtroom utilisation (approximately 2 days a month).

Location

Accrington County Court is situated approximately six miles from Burnley Combined Court. There are frequent train and bus services between Accrington and Burnley. The travel time by train takes approximately 20 minutes at a cost of £4.20 for a return ticket.

Travel by bus takes approximately 45 minutes and costs £4.40 for a day ticket. The journey time by a car is approximately 20 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	100%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	67%	By Public Transport	0-30min	10%
	30-60min	28%		30-60min	84%
	60-120min	5%		60-120min	6%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are two members of staff based at Accrington County Court.

Other information

Accrington County Court is a leasehold property.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs of Accrington County Court were approximately £123,000.

Accrington Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Accrington Magistrates' Court is one of ten magistrates' courts in Lancashire and is in a poor condition. The court deals with non police/private prosecution criminal business and has four courtrooms. The court sits one day a week and courtroom use is very low.

Accrington Magistrates' Court is one of two courts in the East Lancashire local justice area, the other being Blackburn Magistrates' Court which currently administers the workload of Accrington Magistrates' Court.

It is proposed that Accrington Magistrates' Court is closed and the workload transferred to Blackburn Magistrates' Court. No enabling works would be needed at Blackburn Magistrates' Court to accommodate this move.

Should Accrington Magistrates' Court close it will enable the work to be moved to a larger venue and allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

Accommodation

Accrington Magistrates' Court is small and comprises one main storey. Built in 1935 it carries a Grade II listed status. There are four courtrooms of which two are informal and suitable for family and youth hearings. There are five cells available to the magistrates' court however these are in poor condition. The building is in a poor state of repair with leaks to the roof causing damage to public and court areas.

The court is part of a building that is currently shared with the police authority (who are the owners of the property).

Blackburn Magistrates' Court is a Grade II listed building (circa 1912) and was, until recently, part of Blackburn Police Station until the police moved out. There are four courtrooms, two of which can be accessed by disabled users via a lift from the main public entrance.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Accrington Magistrates' Court was utilised at approximately 2% of its capacity.

Location

Accrington Magistrates' Court is located approximately six miles from Blackburn Magistrates' Court. The administrative staff who support Accrington are based at Blackburn and travel to Accrington to support court hearings.

There are good direct public transport links connecting the area. The journey by train from Accrington to Blackburn takes approximately ten minutes and costs £3.50 for a return ticket. The journey by bus takes approximately 40 minutes and costs £4.20 for a return ticket. The journey time by car is approximately 25 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	88%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	69%	By Public Transport	0-30min	18%
	30-60min	28%		30-60min	65%
	60-120min	3%		60-120min	17%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are no staff based at Accrington Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Accrington Magistrates' Court is a leasehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Accrington Magistrates' Court were approximately £80,000.

Bolton County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Bolton County Court and Family Court is located within Bolton Combined Court, and is one of eight county courts in Greater Manchester and deals with civil and some family work. It has four hearing rooms and courtroom use is low.

It is proposed that Bolton County Court and Family Court is closed and its workload transferred to Manchester County Court, which is located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Enabling works would be required to provide additional hearing rooms and judicial and staff accommodation.

Greater Manchester is a compact conurbation with the majority of its civil and family courts being located within nine miles of Manchester city centre. Greater Manchester benefits from an excellent public transport infrastructure comprising an extensive modern tram system (Metrolink), bus and rail services.

The proposed closure of Altrincham, Bolton, Bury, Macclesfield, Oldham, Stockport, Tameside and Warrington County Courts would enable the purpose built Manchester Civil Justice Centre to be fully used to the benefit of court users. In conjunction with the closure of magistrates' courts in Greater Manchester (Bury, Oldham, Stockport and Trafford) this will enable the release of under used court estate.

Manchester County Court is located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre which is in the city centre. It is a modern and purpose built building with excellent facilities for court users.

Should Bolton County Court and Family Court close this will enable the work to be moved to a larger venue and allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts and tribunals hearing rooms being used more efficiently.

The re-location of Bolton Magistrates' Court to Bolton Combined Court is dependent on this closure.

Accommodation

Bolton County Court and Family Court is co-located with Bolton Crown Court in a purpose built building, constructed in the early 1970's. The building complies with the Equality Act 2010. The hearings take place in a civil court room and two district judges' hearing rooms.

Manchester Civil Justice Centre is a modern, purpose built building with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, a quiet room for prayer and contemplation, video conferencing and prison video link equipment, a loop hearing system, wireless internet access and a coffee shop.

Workload

Bolton County Court and Family Court is located within Bolton Combined Court. During the 2014/15 financial year, this venue was utilised for approximately 49% of its capacity.

Location

Bolton County Court and Family Court is located 12 miles from the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. There are good travel links between Bolton and Manchester city centre. There are frequent local bus and train services which have direct routes to Manchester. Travel by train takes approximately 20 minutes and costs £6.40 for an anytime return. Travel by bus takes approximately 50 minutes and costs £4.20 for a day ticket. The journey time by a car is approximately 35 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	88%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	69%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	28%		30-60min	88%
	60-120min	4%		60-120min	12%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 21 members of staff based at Bolton County Court and Family Court.

Other information

Bolton County Court and Family Court is located within Bolton Combined Court. The 2014/2015 operating costs of this venue was approximately £666,000.

The building is a freehold property.

Bury Magistrates' Court and County Court

Proposal

Bury Magistrates' Court and County Court are located in one building at Bury Courthouse. They are one of eight magistrates' and eight county courts in Greater Manchester. The magistrates' court deals with criminal court business in adult and youth courts and the county court deals with civil work and some family work. The court has ten hearing rooms and courtroom use is low.

It is proposed that Bury Magistrates' Court and County Court are closed and that the workload of Bury Magistrates' Court be transferred to Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court, where enabling works will be required to extend accommodation for witnesses. Bury Magistrates' Court is the only court in the Bury and Rochdale local justice area. Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

It is proposed that the workload of Bury County Court be transferred to Manchester County Court, located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Enabling works will be required to provide additional hearing rooms and judicial and staff accommodation.

Bury County Court was proposed for closure in 2010 as part of the Court Estate Reform Programme. The decision to retain Bury County Court was made on the basis that the Bury Courthouse was remaining open and there was sufficient space to accommodate the county court at that time. The current proposal is to release under used court buildings and to close the courthouse in Bury.

Greater Manchester is a compact conurbation with the majority of its courts being located within nine miles of Manchester city centre. Greater Manchester benefits from an excellent public transport infrastructure comprising an extensive modern tram system (Metrolink), bus and rail services.

The proposed closure of Altrincham, Bolton, Bury, Macclesfield, Oldham, Stockport, Tameside and Warrington County Courts would enable the Manchester Civil Justice Centre to be fully used. The closure of Bury, Stockport and Trafford Magistrates' Courts will enable the purpose built Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court to be fully used. This will enable the release of under used court buildings in Greater Manchester.

Manchester County Court and Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court are both located in the centre of the city. They are modern and purpose built buildings with excellent facilities.

Should Bury Magistrates' Court and County Court close it will enable the work to be moved to larger venues and allow the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

Accommodation

Bury Magistrates' Court and County Court is located in one building. The building was constructed as a purpose built magistrates' court and complies with the Equality Act 2010. There are ten courtrooms, of which, eight are magistrates' courtrooms and two county court hearing rooms.

Manchester and Salford Magistrates’ Court and Manchester Civil Justice Centre are both centrally located and are modern, purpose built venues with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, video conferencing and prison video link equipment, a loop hearing system, wireless internet access and a coffee shop.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Bury Courthouse was utilised at approximately 51% of its capacity.

Location

Bury Courthouse is located nine miles from both Manchester and Salford Magistrates’ Court and Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Bury is well served by public transport. There is a frequent local bus service and the Metrolink has a direct route to Manchester city centre.

Travel by Metrolink takes approximately 25 minutes and costs £6.10 for a peak time return. Travel by bus takes approximately one hour and costs £4.20 for a day ticket. The journey time by car is approximately 35 minutes.

Travel time data for these courts pre and post closure are shown below:

Magistrates’ workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	98%	By Car	0-30min	63%
	30-60min	2%		30-60min	36%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%
By Public Transport	0-30min	54%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	38%		30-60min	39%
	60-120min	9%		60-120min	60%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%

Civil and Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	98%	By Car	0-30min	64%
	30-60min	2%		30-60min	35%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%
By Public Transport	0-30min	55%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	38%		30-60min	39%
	60-120min	7%		60-120min	60%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%

Staff implications

There are 55 members of staff based at Bury Magistrates' Court and County Court.

Other information

Bury Courthouse is a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs of this venue was approximately £528,000.

Bury Courthouse is used one day per week to accommodate tribunal hearings. Should Bury Courthouse close arrangements will be made for this work to be heard elsewhere.

Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court

Proposal

Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court are located in one building. There are three other magistrates' courts and three other county courts in Cumbria. The courts deal with criminal court business in the adult and youth courts, civil work and some family work.

It is proposed that Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court are closed and the workload be transferred to Barrow-in-Furness Magistrates' Court and County Court. No enabling works will be required to accommodate the workload from Kendal.

Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court have very low utilisation. Kendal Magistrates' Court is administered from Barrow-in-Furness Magistrates' Court and sits between two and four courts per week. Kendal County Court is administered from Barrow-in-Furness and Carlisle County Courts and sits one day per week for three weeks and two days on the fourth week. The county court operates a counter service on those days when hearings take place. Staff travel from Barrow to support the hearings and provide a limited counter service.

Should Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court close it will enable better use of court facilities within Cumbria as well as delivering other savings such as the release of a building and reduction in operating costs. The work will move to a larger court centre and enable the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

We realise that these proposals could result in some users having significant journeys when travelling to the courts and tribunals, even though the need to is infrequent. We are aware that some members of rural communities will have views on the alternatives we can provide so that the public can still access the justice system. We are keen to understand the potential demand for these alternative methods, such as the use of civic or public buildings, to make sure that any provision established following the closure of a court or tribunal, would be in the right location and with suitable facilities. This type of alternative provision could be particularly useful in the case of these courts.

Due to the nature of the rural areas of the North West region, we are and will continue to be flexible where people have trouble attending a court or tribunal for a particular time due to the availability of transport. By their nature, such requests would be considered through representations made on a case-by-case basis.

Accommodation

Kendal Courthouse is compliant with the Equality Act 2010. It is a split level building which offers a good standard of accommodation for users and is in a good state of repair. There are three courtrooms, two of which have secure docks and direct access from the secure cell area, and a hearing room. The court has a public area with two private consultation rooms. There is limited separation for civil and criminal clients who intermingle in the main waiting area.

The building serves as the designated disabled court in Cumbria, where defendants with mobility issues can be brought from secure cells into the secure dock. Whilst there has been a very limited need for this facility, alternative provision for disabled defendants would be identified following a review of requirements.

Barrow-in-Furness Courthouse offers a good standard of accommodation and facilities. The waiting facilities for civil and family court users are separate from the criminal side of the business. There is a separate, self-contained victim and witness suite, secure docks in three court rooms with secure cell access, prison-to-court video links with updated installations to two victim and witness booths. A dedicated advocates' room also has video conferencing facilities. Accommodation is provided for the Crown Prosecution Service, Probation and the Youth Offending Team on days they are attending court.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court was utilised at approximately 13% of its capacity.

Location

Barrow-in-Furness Magistrates' Court is situated 37 miles from Kendal. The journey by car takes approximately 55 minutes.

There is an hourly bus service from Kendal to Barrow which takes approximately one hour 40 minutes. A return ticket costs £10.80.

A train journey from Kendal to Barrow would require two changes and takes between 1.5 and 2.5 hours, at a cost of £25.90 for an anytime return.

Travel time data for these courts pre and post closure are shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	75%	By Car	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	25%		30-60min	49%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	51%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	18%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	33%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	23%		60-120min	38%
	>120min	16%		>120min	47%
	no data	11%		no data	15%

Civil and Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	75%	By Car	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	25%		30-60min	49%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	51%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	18%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	33%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	23%		60-120min	38%
	>120min	16%		>120min	47%
	no data	11%		no data	15%

Staff Implications

There are three members of staff based at Kendal Magistrates' Court and County Court. The building also accommodates enforcement staff.

Other information

Kendal Courthouse is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs of the building were approximately £241,000.

Employment Tribunal hearings estimated to take more than three days are listed at Kendal Courthouse. Should the closure take place alternative arrangements will be made for these hearings.

Macclesfield County Court

Proposal

Macclesfield County Court is one of four county courts in Cheshire and deals with civil and family work.

It is proposed that Macclesfield County Court is closed and its workload transferred to Manchester County Court, which is located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. The current county court accommodation has limited facilities and courtroom use is low. Enabling works to provide additional hearing rooms and judicial and staff accommodation would be required.

Manchester County Court is located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre which is in the city centre. It is a modern and purpose built building with excellent facilities for court users.

Should Macclesfield County Court close it will enable work to be moved to a larger venue and allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

Accommodation

Macclesfield County Court is located in a leasehold building, in the town centre, shared with private sector tenants. The county court accommodation is small and public areas have limited facilities. There are security issues due to the shared nature of the building.

There are two hearing rooms and a library which occasionally doubles as a hearing room when required. These are of a reasonable standard and there are no issues for disabled court users.

Manchester Civil Justice Centre is a modern, purpose built building with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, a quiet room for prayer and contemplation, video conferencing and prison video link equipment, a loop hearing system, wireless internet access and a coffee shop.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Macclesfield County Court was utilised at approximately 45% of its capacity.

Location

Macclesfield County Court is situated 20 miles from the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. There are frequent train and bus services between Macclesfield and Manchester.

The travel time by train is approximately 35 minutes. By bus, travel time can take up to two hours at peak times. The approximate cost of a return train ticket is £14.90 and an all day saver bus ticket is £5.00. The journey time by car is approximately one hour.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	99%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	60%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	34%		30-60min	9%
	60-120min	1%		60-120min	82%
	>120min	0%		>120min	4%
	no data	5%		no data	5%

Staff implications

There are ten members of staff based at Macclesfield County Court.

Other information

Macclesfield County Court is a leasehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Macclesfield County Court were approximately £275,000.

Macclesfield Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Macclesfield Magistrates' Court is one of five magistrates' courts in Cheshire. The court deals with criminal business in the adult and youth courts. It is one of two courts in the South and East Cheshire local justice area, the other being Crewe Magistrates' Court which currently administers the workload of Macclesfield Magistrates' Court.

Macclesfield Magistrates' Court has two courtrooms and courtroom use is low.

It is proposed that Macclesfield Magistrates' Court is closed and the workload moved to Crewe Magistrates' Court which is co-located with Crewe County Court. No enabling works would be required at Crewe Magistrates' Court to accommodate the staff and judiciary.

Should Macclesfield Magistrates' Court close it will enable the work to be moved to a larger venue and allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

Accommodation

Macclesfield Magistrates' Court is located on the edge of Macclesfield town centre. It is a small site with two courtrooms which hear criminal cases only. The two courtrooms are of a good standard; there are witness link video facilities, but no prison-to-court video link. The public areas are of a reasonable standard; however the judicial areas are poor. The building is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

The courthouse in Crewe has better disabled access than Macclesfield, although not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. Disabled defendants from Crewe and Macclesfield are currently transferred to West Cheshire Magistrates' Court in Chester when required.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Macclesfield Magistrates' Court was utilised at approximately 44% of its capacity.

Location

Macclesfield is 21 miles from Crewe and is linked by a major road. There are public transport links available but these can be indirect and cross-country.

Crewe Magistrates' Court is located in a central position to the town and has public parking nearby. A car journey takes approximately 45 minutes.

There is no direct train between Macclesfield and Crewe, requiring a change at either Stockport or Kidsgrove. Journey times range from 44 minutes to one hour. The cost is up to £16.90 for a return journey.

A bus journey takes approximately one hour 15 minutes between Macclesfield and Crewe. The cost is £5.00 for a return journey.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	17%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	83%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	50%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	38%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	7%		60-120min	83%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	5%		no data	5%

Staff implications

There is one member of staff based at Macclesfield Magistrates' Court. Other staff travel to Macclesfield from Crewe on a daily basis.

Other information

Macclesfield Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Macclesfield Magistrates' Court were approximately £120,000.

Oldham County Court

Proposal

Oldham County Court is one of eight county courts in Greater Manchester and deals with civil work and some family work. It has seven hearings rooms and courtroom use is very low.

It is proposed that Oldham County Court is closed and the workload transferred to Manchester County Court, which is located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Enabling works to provide additional hearing rooms and judicial and staff accommodation will be required.

Greater Manchester is a compact conurbation with the majority of its civil and family courts being located within nine miles of Manchester city centre. Greater Manchester benefits from an excellent public transport infrastructure comprising an extensive modern tram system (Metrolink), bus and rail services.

The proposed closure of Altrincham, Bolton, Bury, Macclesfield, Oldham, Stockport, Tameside and Warrington County Courts would enable the purpose built Manchester Civil Justice Centre to be fully used. In conjunction with the closure of magistrates' courts in Greater Manchester (Bury, Oldham, Stockport and Trafford) this will enable the release of under used court buildings.

Should Oldham County Court close it will enable the work to be moved to a larger venue and allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts and tribunals hearing rooms being used more efficiently.

Accommodation

Oldham County Court is located in a modern building and has seven hearing rooms. The building complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Manchester Civil Justice Centre is a modern, purpose built building with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, a quiet room for prayer and contemplation, video conferencing and prison video link equipment, a loop hearing system, wireless internet access and a coffee shop.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Oldham County Court was utilised at approximately 12% of its capacity.

Location

Oldham County Court is located approximately eight miles from the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. There are good travel links between Oldham and Manchester city centre. There is a frequent local bus service and Metrolink which has a direct route to Manchester city centre.

The Metrolink takes approximately 25 minutes and costs £5.40 for a peak time return. Travel by bus takes approximately 40 minutes and costs £4.20 for a day ticket. The journey time by a car is approximately 35 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	55%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	45%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	51%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	48%		30-60min	60%
	60-120min	1%		60-120min	40%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 31 members of staff based at Oldham County Court.

Other information

The Oldham County Court building is a leasehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Oldham County Court were approximately £666,000.

Oldham Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Oldham Magistrates' Court is one of eight magistrates' courts in Greater Manchester and deals with criminal business in adult and youth courts. It has eight hearing rooms and courtroom use is very low.

It is proposed that Oldham Magistrates' Court is closed and its workload transferred to Tameside Magistrates' Court. This proposal is dependant on the closure of Tameside County Court taking place to create capacity for the incoming workload. No enabling works will be required to accommodate the workload from Oldham.

This is the only court in the Oldham local justice area. Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

The proposed closure of Oldham Magistrates' Court would enable the purpose built Tameside Magistrates' Court to be fully used and would enable the release of under used court buildings in Greater Manchester.

Should Oldham Magistrates' Court close it will allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

Accommodation

Oldham Magistrates' Court was built in 1960 and has a total of eight courtrooms with the accommodation split over three floors.

There are currently large sections of the building unused and difficulties can arise due to the staff and courtrooms being located over three floors. In some areas of the building standards of accommodation are very good and in others, mainly the public areas, the standard is unsatisfactory.

Tameside Magistrates' Court is located in a modern purpose built building and has eight hearing rooms, two of which are presently used by the county court. The building complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year Oldham Magistrates' Court was utilised at approximately 28% of its capacity.

Location

Oldham Magistrates' Court is located five miles from Tameside Magistrates' Court. Oldham is well served by public transport. There is a frequent bus service between Oldham and Ashton-under Lyne which takes approximately 20 minutes and costs £4.20 for a day ticket.

Both Oldham and Ashton-under-Lyne benefit from the Metrolink service; however there is not a direct service between the two centres and a journey using this method would have to be made via Manchester city centre.

The journey time by a car is approximately 15 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	97%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	3%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	55%	By Public Transport	0-30min	2%
	30-60min	44%		30-60min	34%
	60-120min	1%		60-120min	64%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 22 members of staff based at Oldham Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Oldham Magistrates' Court is a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Oldham Magistrates' Court were approximately £418,000.

Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court

Proposal

Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court is one of ten magistrates' courts in Lancashire. The court deals with criminal court business and is one of seven family hearing centres in Lancashire. It has three hearing rooms and courtroom use is very low.

It is proposed that Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court is closed and the criminal workload moved to Preston Magistrates' Court and the family workload moved to Leyland Magistrates' Court. No enabling works would be needed at either Preston or Leyland to accommodate this move.

This is the only court in the Ormskirk local justice area. Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas. There is, however, a consultation on a bench merger already underway.

Should Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court close it will allow the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently. Court users and staff will also benefit from a better standard of accommodation.

Accommodation

Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court provides a poor standard of accommodation for court users, staff and judiciary. It lacks proper interview facilities for court users. There are inadequate victim and witness facilities for family court users. There are security issues in terms of separation of judicial and public facilities. The building is in a poor state of repair and requires substantial expenditure to bring it up to standard. Ormskirk does not meet the minimum standards of the Equality Act 2010.

Preston Magistrates' Court is a purpose built magistrates' court (circa 1971). It has accommodation on three floors which offer good facilities for court users and staff. There are six courtrooms. Cells are located on the lower ground floor level. Users with a disability can access courtrooms on the upper floors via a lift.

Leyland Magistrates' Court is a purpose built magistrates' court (1970s) now used as a family hearing centre and is a freehold site situated in the town centre adjacent to the police station. The building offers a reasonable standard of accommodation over three floors. There are three courtrooms and although there is no lift customers with a disability can gain access to the ground floor courtroom.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court was utilised for approximately 29% of its capacity.

Location

Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court is located 18.5 miles from Preston Magistrates' Court. The administrative support staff are based at Preston and staff travel to Ormskirk for court hearings.

The journey between Ormskirk and Preston can be made by public transport. The journey by train takes approximately 30 minutes and costs £7.90 for a day return ticket. By bus the journey takes approximately one hour 25 minutes and costs £4.40 for a day ticket. The journey time by car is approximately 40 minutes.

Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court is located approximately 14 miles from Leyland Magistrates' Court. Travel by train takes approximately 55 minutes, requiring a change at Preston, and costs £13.40 for an anytime return ticket. By bus the journey takes approximately one hour 15 minutes via Broadgate, at a cost of £9.80 for a return ticket. The journey time by car is approximately 32 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	89%	By Car	0-30min	9%
	30-60min	11%		30-60min	80%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	10%
By Public Transport	0-30min	31%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	35%		30-60min	29%
	60-120min	33%		60-120min	59%
	>120min	0%		>120min	1%
	no data	1%		no data	11%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	90%	By Car	0-30min	8%
	30-60min	10%		30-60min	70%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	21%
By Public Transport	0-30min	27%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	34%		30-60min	24%
	60-120min	38%		60-120min	53%
	>120min	1%		>120min	1%
	no data	1%		no data	22%

Staff implications

There are three members of staff permanently based at Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court.

Other information

Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court is a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Ormskirk Magistrates' Court and Family Court were approximately £144,000.

Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court is one of five magistrates' courts in Cheshire and deals with criminal business in adult and youth courts. It has four hearing rooms and courtroom use is low.

Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court is one of two courts in the North Cheshire local justice area. Its workload is administered from Warrington Magistrates' Court.

It is proposed that Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court is closed and its workload transferred to Warrington Magistrates' Court. This proposal forms part of a plan to re-locate Warrington Magistrates' Court to the Warrington Combined Court. The magistrates' court will be located alongside the crown court in a single venue for criminal work, where court users and staff will benefit from a better standard of accommodation. This proposal is dependant on the closure of Warrington County Court to create capacity for the incoming workload. No enabling works would be required.

Should Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court close it will enable the work to be administered in a single venue and allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

Accommodation

Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court is located within in a 1970's development. Facilities for witnesses are good. The public waiting area and other facilities are adequate but staff facilities are of a poor standard. There are four courtrooms and four cells. The building also houses the Cheshire and Merseyside Central Payment and Enforcement Unit.

Warrington Combined Court is within walking distance of Warrington town centre. The building is of a good standard with disabled access. There are no security issues. No enabling works will be required for this proposal.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court was utilised at approximately 66% of its capacity.

Location

Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court is located ten miles from Warrington Combined Court.

There is a regular, indirect train service between Runcorn and Warrington requiring one change. The travelling time takes approximately 45 minutes and costs £12.40.

A regular bus service is available with a travelling time of up to an hour and costs £5.00 for a day ticket. The journey time by a car is approximately 25 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	90%	By Car	0-30min	81%
	30-60min	10%		30-60min	19%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	30%	By Public Transport	0-30min	9%
	30-60min	42%		30-60min	61%
	60-120min	24%		60-120min	26%
	>120min	3%		>120min	1%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

Staff implications

There is one member of staff based at Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court. The Cheshire and Merseyside Central Payment and Enforcement Unit has 90 staff based at Runcorn.

Other information

Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court is a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court were approximately £349,000.

Tribunal sittings take place at Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court on one day every two weeks. Should Runcorn close an alternative venue will be found for these hearings.

St Helens Magistrates' Court and County Court

Proposal

St Helens Magistrates' Court and County Court are located in one building. They are one of four magistrates' courts and three county courts in Merseyside. The magistrates court deals with criminal business in adult and youth courts and the county court with civil work and some family work.

It is proposed that St Helens Magistrates' Court and County Court are closed and that the workload of St Helens Magistrates' Court's is transferred to Liverpool and Knowsley Magistrates' Court, where no enabling work will be required. It is proposed that the workload of St Helens County Court is transferred to Liverpool Civil and Family Court. Some enabling works to provide additional accommodation for judiciary and storage will be required.

The Merseyside area benefits from good public transport links to Liverpool city centre where Liverpool and Knowsley Magistrates' Court and Liverpool Civil and Family Court are located.

Should St Helens Magistrates' Court and County Court close it will enable the work to be moved to larger venues and allow the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

St Helens Magistrates' Court is the only court in the St Helens local justice area. Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

Accommodation

St Helens Courthouse building is in good condition with modern facilities and complies with the Equality Act 2010. There are five courtrooms and two hearing rooms shared between the county court and the magistrates' court.

Liverpool and Knowsley Magistrates' Court is located with Liverpool Crown Court, in a single centre for crime, in the centre of the city. This venue is modern, with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, video conferencing and prison video link equipment, a mobile hearing enhancement system, wireless internet access and refreshments are available.

Liverpool Civil and Family Court is located in the centre of the city. It is a modern venue with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, children's room, a quiet room for prayer and contemplation, hearing enhancement facilities, a vulnerable witness waiting room and refreshments are available.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, St Helens Magistrates' Court and County Court was utilised at approximately 62% of its capacity.

Location

St Helens Magistrates’ Court is located 14.5 miles from Liverpool and Knowsley Magistrates’ Court and St Helens County Court is located 14 miles from Liverpool Civil and Family Court.

St Helens is well served by public transport with a direct rail and bus service between St Helens and Liverpool. The cost of a peak time return ticket, by train, is £5.70. The travel time is approximately 35 minutes.

There is a frequent bus service between St Helens and Liverpool. A day ticket costs £5.00 and the travel time is approximately one hour. The journey time by a car is approximately 45 minutes.

Travel time data for these courts pre and post closure are shown below:

Magistrates’ workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	43%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	57%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	65%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	34%		30-60min	36%
	60-120min	1%		60-120min	64%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Civil and Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	43%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	57%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	45%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	33%		30-60min	45%
	60-120min	22%		60-120min	54%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 32 members of staff based at St Helens Courthouse.

Other information

St Helens Courthouse is a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs of the venue were approximately £281,000.

Tribunal hearings take place at St Helens one day per week. Should St Helens Courthouse close, alternative arrangements will be made for these hearings.

Stockport Magistrates' Court and County Court

Proposal

Stockport Magistrates' Court and County Court are located in one building and are one of eight magistrates' and eight county courts in Greater Manchester. The magistrates' court deals with criminal business in adult and youth courts and the county court with civil work and some family work.

It is proposed that Stockport Magistrates' Court and County Court are closed and the workload of Stockport Magistrates' Court is transferred to Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court, where enabling works would be required to extend accommodation for witnesses. It is proposed that the workload of Stockport County Court be transferred to Manchester County Court, located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Enabling works would be required to provide additional hearing rooms and judicial and staff accommodation.

Greater Manchester is a compact conurbation with the majority of its courts being located within nine miles of Manchester city centre. Greater Manchester benefits from an excellent public transport infrastructure comprising an extensive modern tram system (Metrolink), bus and rail services.

The proposed closure of Altrincham, Bolton, Bury, Macclesfield, Oldham, Stockport, Tameside and Warrington County Courts would enable the Manchester Civil Justice Centre to be fully used. The closure of Bury, Stockport and Trafford Magistrates' Courts will enable the purpose built Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court to be fully used. This will enable the release of under used court buildings in Greater Manchester.

Manchester County Court, which is located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre and Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court are both located in the centre of the city. They are modern and purpose built buildings with excellent facilities.

Should Stockport Magistrates' Court and County Court close it will enable the work to be moved to larger venues and allow the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

Stockport Magistrates' Court is the only court in the Stockport local justice area. Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

Accommodation

Stockport Courthouse is a purpose built building opened in 1989, and comprises 11 court/hearing rooms, four of which are used by the county court. The building complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court and Manchester Civil Justice Centre are both centrally located and are modern, purpose built venues with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, video conferencing and prison video link equipment, a loop hearing system, wireless internet access and a coffee shop.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year Stockport Magistrates' Court and County Court, was utilised at approximately 54% of its capacity.

Location

Stockport Magistrates' Court and County Court is located eight miles from both Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court and Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Stockport is well served by public transport. There are frequent local bus and rail services.

Travel by train takes approximately 15 minutes and costs £5.90 for an anytime return. Travel by bus takes approximately 45 minutes and costs £4.10 for a day rider ticket. The journey time by a car is approximately 30 minutes.

Travel time data for these court pre and post closure are shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	76%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	24%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	55%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	44%		30-60min	63%
	60-120min	0%		60-120min	37%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Civil and Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	77%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	23%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Public Transport	0-30min	55%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	44%		30-60min	63%
	60-120min	0%		60-120min	37%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 47 members of staff based at Stockport Courthouse.

Other information

Stockport Courthouse is a freehold building.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at this venue were approximately £879,000.

Tribunal hearings take place at Stockport Courthouse on three days per week. Should Stockport Courthouse close an alternative venue would be found for these hearings.

Tameside County Court

Proposal

Tameside County Court is co-located with Tameside Magistrates' Court in one building. The county court is one of eight county courts in Greater Manchester and deals with civil work and some family work. It has two hearing rooms and low courtroom use.

It is proposed that Tameside County Court is closed and its workload transferred to Manchester County Court, located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Enabling works will be required to provide additional hearing rooms and judicial and staff accommodation.

Greater Manchester is a compact conurbation with the majority of its civil and family courts being located within nine miles of Manchester city centre. Greater Manchester benefits from an excellent public transport infrastructure comprising an extensive modern tram system (Metrolink), bus and rail services.

The proposed closure of Altrincham, Bolton, Bury, Macclesfield, Oldham, Stockport, Tameside and Warrington County Courts would enable the purpose built Manchester Civil Justice Centre to be fully used to the benefit of court users. In conjunction with the closure of magistrates' courts in Greater Manchester (Bury, Oldham, Stockport and Trafford) this will enable the release of under used court buildings.

Manchester Civil Justice Centre is located in the city centre, which is within reasonable travelling distance. Manchester County Court is within this building which is modern and was purpose built, and provides excellent facilities.

Should Tameside County Court close it will enable the work to be moved to a larger venue and allow the receiving court to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts and tribunals being used more efficiently.

The proposal to close Oldham Magistrates' Court and move its work to Tameside Magistrates' Court is dependant on the closure of Tameside County Court and its workload moving to Manchester County Court.

Accommodation

Tameside County Court is co-located with Tameside Magistrates' Court in a modern purpose built building, and has eight hearing rooms, two of which are used by the county court. The building complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Manchester Civil Justice Centre is a modern, purpose built building with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, a quiet room for prayer and contemplation, video conferencing and prison video link equipment, a loop hearing system, wireless internet access and a coffee shop.

Workload

Tameside County Court is co-located with Tameside Magistrates' Court and during the 2014/15 financial year utilisation at this venue was approximately 44%.

Location

Tameside County Court is located seven miles from the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. There are good travel links between Ashton-under-Lyne and Manchester city centre.

There is a frequent local bus service, a train service and the Metrolink which have direct routes to Manchester city centre. Travel by train takes approximately 20 minutes and costs £5.90 for an anytime return. The Metrolink takes approximately 30 minutes and costs £5.40 for a peak time return. Travel by bus takes approximately 45 minutes and costs £4.10 for a day ticket. The journey time by car is approximately 35 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	87%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	13%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	53%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	47%		30-60min	82%
	60-120min	1%		60-120min	18%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 11 members of staff based at Tameside County Court.

Other information

Tameside County Court is co-located with Tameside Magistrates' Court in a freehold property.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at the venue were approximately £566,000.

Trafford Magistrates' Court and Altrincham County Court

Proposal

Trafford Magistrates' Court and Altrincham County Court are located in one building. They are one of eight magistrates' courts and eight county courts in Greater Manchester. The magistrates' court deals with criminal business in adult and youth courts and the county court with civil work and some family work. Trafford Magistrates' Court has eight hearing rooms. Courtroom use is very low with the magistrates' court only sitting three courts on three days and two courts on two days per week. Altrincham County Court has three hearing rooms, also with very low courtroom utilisation.

It is proposed that Trafford Magistrates' Court and Altrincham County Court are closed and the workload of Trafford Magistrates' Court is transferred to Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court, where enabling work will be required to extend accommodation for witnesses. This is the only court in the Trafford local justice area. Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

It is proposed the workload of Altrincham County Court is transferred to Manchester County Court, which is located within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Enabling work would be required to provide additional hearing rooms, judicial and staff accommodation.

Greater Manchester is a compact conurbation with the majority of its courts being located within nine miles of Manchester city centre. Greater Manchester benefits from an excellent public transport infrastructure comprising an extensive modern tram system (Metrolink), bus and rail services.

The proposed closure of Altrincham, Bolton, Bury, Macclesfield, Oldham, Stockport, Tameside and Warrington County Courts would enable the Manchester Civil Justice Centre to be fully used. The closure of Bury, Stockport and Trafford Magistrates' Courts will enable the purpose built Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court to be fully used. This will enable the release of under used court buildings in Greater Manchester.

Manchester County Court and Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court are both located in the centre of the city. They are modern and purpose built buildings with excellent facilities.

Should Trafford Magistrates' Court and Altrincham County Court close this will enable the work to be moved to larger venues and allow the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

Accommodation

Trafford Courthouse was built in 1985 and complies with the Equality Act 2010. It is a purpose built magistrates' court with 11 courtrooms.

Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court and Manchester Civil Justice Centre are both centrally located and are modern, purpose built venues with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, video conferencing and prison video link equipment, a loop hearing system, wireless internet access and a coffee shop.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year Trafford Courthouse was utilised at approximately 27% of its capacity.

Location

Trafford Magistrates' Court and Altrincham County Court are located in Sale, approximately five miles from both Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court and the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Sale is well served by public transport. The Metrolink has a direct service from Sale to Manchester City Centre. The cost of a peak time return ticket is £5.70. The travel time is approximately 15 minutes.

There is a frequent bus service between Sale and Manchester, a day ticket costs £4.20. The travel time is approximately 45 minutes. The journey time by car is approximately 25 minutes.

Travel time data for these courts pre and post closure are shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	92%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	8%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	44%	By Public Transport	0-30min	8%
	30-60min	46%		30-60min	71%
	60-120min	10%		60-120min	20%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Civil and Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	92%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	8%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	45%	By Public Transport	0-30min	8%
	30-60min	46%		30-60min	71%
	60-120min	9%		60-120min	21%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 31 members of staff based at Trafford Courthouse.

Other information

Trafford Courthouse is a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs of the venue were approximately £589,000.

Warrington County Court

Proposal

Warrington County Court is one of four county courts in Cheshire and deals with civil work and some family work.

It is proposed that Warrington County Court is closed and the workload is transferred between Liverpool Civil and Family Court and Manchester County Court. Some enabling works will be required to provide additional accommodation for judiciary and storage in Liverpool and additional hearing rooms, judicial and staff accommodation in Manchester.

Liverpool Civil and Family Court is located in the city centre and is a modern venue with excellent facilities for court users.

Manchester Civil Justice Centre is a modern and purpose built building located in the centre of the city. Manchester County Court is within this building and provides excellent facilities.

Should Warrington County Court close it will enable the work to be moved to larger venues and allow the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service will be delivered with courts and tribunals hearing rooms being used more efficiently.

The proposed closure of Runcorn (Halton) Magistrates' Court and re-location of Warrington Magistrates' Court to Warrington Combined Court is dependent on the closure of Warrington County Court.

Accommodation

Warrington County Court is co-located with Warrington Crown Court to form the Warrington Combined Court. It has five hearing rooms. The accommodation is of a good standard with disabled access and meets the minimum requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Liverpool Civil and Family Court is located in the centre of the city. It is a modern venue with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, children's room, a quiet room for prayer and contemplation, hearing enhancement facilities, a vulnerable witness waiting room and refreshments are available.

Manchester Civil Justice Centre is a modern, purpose built building with excellent facilities including interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilets, baby changing rooms, a quiet room for prayer and contemplation, video conferencing and prison video link equipment, a loop hearing system, wireless internet access and a coffee shop.

Workload

Warrington County Court is located within Warrington Combined Court, and during the 2014/15 financial year, this venue was utilised at approximately 65% of its capacity.

Location

Warrington County Court is located 17.5 miles from Liverpool Civil and Family Court and 18.5 miles from Manchester Civil Justice Centre. There are good transport links to both Liverpool and Manchester.

Travel by train from Warrington to Liverpool takes between 30 and 45 minutes at a cost of £8.30 for an anytime return ticket. The journey to Manchester takes approximately 40 minutes and costs £9.30 for an anytime return.

There is a regular bus service between Warrington and Liverpool costing £5.00 for a day ticket. The journey time is approximately one hour 30 minutes. An hourly bus service runs between Warrington and Manchester, a day ticket costs £4.20. The travel time is approximately two hours at peak times.

The journey time by car to Liverpool is approximately 45 minutes and to Manchester approximately 35 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	92%	By Car	0-30min	31%
	30-60min	8%		30-60min	69%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	43%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	41%		30-60min	25%
	60-120min	15%		60-120min	73%
	>120min	0%		>120min	1%
	no data	1%		no data	1%

Staff implications

There are 28 members of staff based at Warrington County Court.

Other information

Warrington County Court is located within Warrington Combined Court in a freehold property.

Operating costs at the venue during the 2014/15 financial year were approximately £494,000.

Tribunal hearings take place on one day per week and would continue to sit at Warrington Combined Court.

West Cumbria Magistrates' Court and County Court

Proposal

West Cumbria Magistrates' Court and County Court are located in one building. They are one of four magistrates' courts and four county courts in Cumbria. The magistrates' court deals with criminal business in adult and youth courts and the county court with civil work and some family work. It has two courtrooms and two hearing rooms and courtroom use is low.

It is proposed that West Cumbria Magistrates' Court and County Court are closed and the workload of West Cumbria Magistrates' Court is transferred to Carlisle Magistrates' Court, with a limited amount of work transferring to Barrow-in-Furness Magistrates' Court. Some enabling works would be required at Carlisle Magistrates' Court to accommodate the workload.

It is proposed the workload of West Cumbria County Court is transferred to Carlisle Combined Court where no enabling works are required.

Should West Cumbria Magistrates' Court and County Court close and its business move it would enable better use of court facilities within Cumbria, as well as delivering other savings such as the release of a building and a reduction in operating costs. The work will be moved to larger court centres and enable the courts to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved service would then be delivered with courts being used more efficiently.

We realise that these proposals could result in some users having significant journeys when travelling to the courts and tribunals, even though the need to is infrequent. We are aware that some members of rural communities will have views on the alternatives we can provide so that the public can still access the justice system. We are keen to understand the potential demand for these alternative methods, such as the use of civic or public buildings, to make sure that any provision established following the closure of a court or tribunal, would be in the right location and with suitable facilities. This type of alternative provision could be particularly useful in the case of these courts.

Due to the nature of the rural areas of the North West region, we are and will continue to be flexible where people have trouble attending a court or tribunal for a particular time due to the availability of transport. By their nature, such requests would be considered through representations made on a case-by-case basis.

Accommodation

West Cumbria Courthouse, located in Workington, is a purpose built building providing a good level of facilities for court users. There are two courtrooms and two hearing rooms.

Carlisle Magistrates' Court offers a good standard of facilities for court users and staff, having benefited from improvement works in recent years. Facilities include baby changing, disabled access and toilets, consultation rooms, hearing enhancement, video conferencing and prison video link equipment and refreshments. The building complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Barrow-in-Furness Magistrates' Court offers a good standard of accommodation and facilities. The waiting facilities for civil and family court users are separate from the criminal. There is a separate, self-contained victim and witness suite, secure docks in three court rooms with secure cell access and prison-to-court video links with updated installations to two victim and witness booths. A dedicated advocates' room also has

video conferencing facilities. Accommodation is provided for the Crown Prosecution Service, Probation and the Youth Offending Team on days they are attending court.

Carlisle Combined Court is a modern, purpose built building with excellent facilities including disabled access and toilets, hearing enhancement system, video conferencing and prison video link facilities, wireless internet and refreshments on site. It is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year West Cumbria Magistrates' Court and County Court was utilised at approximately 42% of its capacity.

Location

West Cumbria Magistrates' Court and County Court is situated 32 miles from Carlisle. The journey by car takes approximately 50 minutes.

There is a regular train and bus service between Workington and Carlisle. The train journey takes approximately 55 minutes at a cost of £10.10 return. The bus journey takes approximately one hour 25 minutes. A return ticket costs £10.80.

A small proportion of West Cumbria's criminal work will move to Barrow. Mostly this work is anticipated to originate to the south of Whitehaven where population centres are small. This would require bench boundaries to be changed. The distance from Seascale to Barrow is 36 miles and the journey by car takes approximately one hour ten minutes. There is a regular train service between the two centres and the journey by train takes approximately one hour and costs £9.90 for a return. There is no direct bus service between Seascale and Barrow.

Travel time data for these court pre and post closure are shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	83%	By Car	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	17%		30-60min	42%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	58%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	18%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	26%		30-60min	1%
	60-120min	44%		60-120min	48%
	>120min	7%		>120min	43%
	no data	5%		no data	8%

Civil and Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	83%	By Car	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	17%		30-60min	42%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	58%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	18%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	26%		30-60min	1%
	60-120min	44%		60-120min	48%
	>120min	7%		>120min	43%
	no data	5%		no data	8%

Staff implications

There are 18 members of staff based at West Cumbria Courthouse.

Other information

West Cumbria Courthouse is in a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs of the venue were approximately £239,000.

Tribunal hearings take place on one day per week. Should West Cumbria Courthouse close alternative arrangements will be made for these hearings.

Questionnaire

We would welcome responses to the following questions.

Question 1. Do you agree with the proposals? What overall comments would you like to make on the proposals?

Question 2. Will the proposals for the provision of court and tribunal services have a direct impact on you? If yes, please provide further details.

Question 3. Are there other particular impacts of the proposals that HM Courts & Tribunals Service should take into account when making a decision? Please provide details.

Question 4. Our assessment of the likely impacts and supporting analysis is set out in the Impact Assessment accompanying this consultation. Do you have any comments on the evidence used or conclusions reached? Please provide any additional evidence that you believe could be helpful.

Question 5. Are there alternatives to travelling to a physical building that would be a benefit to some users? These could include using technology to engage remotely or the use of other, civic or public buildings for hearings as demand requires. Please explain your answer, with specific examples and evidence of the potential demand for the service where possible.

Question 6. Please provide any additional comments that you have.

Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise.

About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

Full name	
Job title or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)	
Date	
Company name/organisation (if applicable):	
Address	
Postcode	
If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box	<input type="checkbox"/> (please tick box)
Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above	

If you are a representative of a group, please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent.

Contact details/How to respond

Please send your response by 8 October 2015 to:

**HMCTS Consultation
Ministry of Justice
Post point 1.13
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ**

Fax: 0870 761 7768

Email: estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact the Ministry of Justice at the above address.

Extra copies

Further paper copies of this consultation can be obtained from this address and it is also available on-line at www.gov.uk/moj.

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from the Ministry of Justice (please see details above).

Publication of response

A response to this consultation exercise will be available on-line at www.justice.gov/moj.

Representative groups

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent when they respond.

Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Ministry.

The Ministry will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Impact Assessment

Impact Assessment for proposals likely to affect businesses, charities, voluntary sector or the public sector – see guidance on: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-assessment-template-for-government-policies>)

Consultation principles

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

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request estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk**