

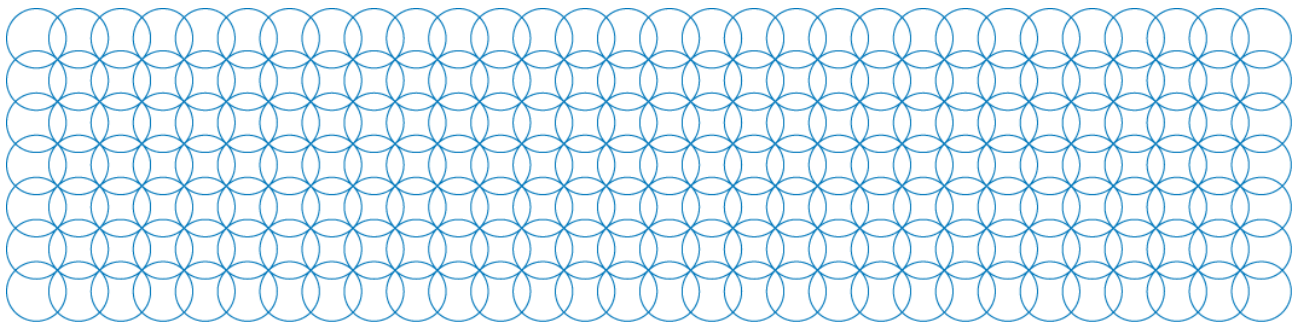


Ministry
of Justice

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

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

About this consultation

To: The consultation is aimed at court users, magistracy, judiciary, and anyone else with an interest in the provision of local justice arrangements in the North East region.

Duration: From 16/07/2015 to 08/10/2015

Enquiries (including requests for the paper in an alternative format) to: HMCTS Consultation
Ministry of Justice
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How to respond: Please send your response by 08/10/2015 to:

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

Tel: 0161 240 5021

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Email: estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

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/>

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
The proposals	8
Questionnaire	35
About you	36
Contact details/How to respond	37
Impact Assessment	39
Consultation principles	40

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 East 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 East. 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 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. 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.

Mark Swales

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

Introduction

This consultation for the North East 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, Northumbria. 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 HM Courts & Tribunals Service 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 HM Courts & Tribunals Service 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 & Tribunal 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

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

- Consett Magistrates' Court
- Halifax County Court and Family Court
- Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' Court and Family Court
- Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court
- Morpeth County Court
- Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court
- Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court
- Wakefield Magistrates' Court

The consultation is aimed at court users, judiciary, court staff, and anyone else with an interest in the provision of justice in the North East Region.

Travel times

We have modelled potential travel times to court to illustrate the changes that would result should the court close. The model is based on 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 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 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.

Copies of this consultation paper will be sent to stakeholders in the affected locations, and is also available on the justice website at www.justice.gov.uk

Integrations

An integration is when HM Courts & Tribunals Service move work to allow jurisdictions to operate from less locations in a local area. This allows the closure of a building or buildings while retaining jurisdictions locally.

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.

In addition to the proposed closures in this consultation the following integrations will be taking place or have already been recently completed in the North East region:

Doncaster County Court to be integrated within Doncaster Magistrates' Court

Work on this integration will commence in the summer of 2015 and will reduce the HM Courts & Tribunals Service estate in Doncaster from four buildings to two (the current Magistrates' Court and Crown Court buildings) which are located on the opposite side of the same road in the centre of Doncaster. The integration will see the relocation of all Doncaster County Court, Civil and Family work to the Magistrates' Court building. In addition the Justices Clerk for Humber and South Yorkshire, her clerkship Judicial Support Unit (JSU) and the office currently housing the Regional Delivery Director would relocate to the Crown Court building from the Magistrates' Court. This would enable county court staff including the centralised divorce team for Humber and South Yorkshire to be accommodated in the Magistrates' Court building. No enabling works are required to accommodate this move. The integration will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow a more efficient use of staff and judicial time. The impact on customers will be minimal as all venues are situated in the centre of Doncaster.

Doncaster Tribunal (Portland Place) to be integrated within Doncaster Crown Court.

Work on this integration will commence in the summer of 2015 and will reduce the HM Courts & Tribunals Service estate in Doncaster from four buildings to two (the current Magistrates' Court and Crown Court buildings) which are located on the opposite side of the same road in the centre of Doncaster. The Crown Court building currently houses the Coroner and occasional crown court hearings (on the first floor) the very large jury assembly suite on the ground floor would be relocated to existing office space which will enable the creation of two tribunal hearing rooms and associated facilities in the current jury assembly area and other available space on the ground floor. Disabled access (platform lift) for the Social Service and Child Support (SSCS) judiciary would be provided from the judicial car park. This site also provides a permanent presence for the Coroners Court in Doncaster. The integration will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow a more efficient use of staff and judicial time. The impact on customers will be minimal as all venues are situated in the centre of Doncaster.

Durham Elvet House Tribunal to be integrated within other locations within the County Durham estate, including Durham County and Family Court

This integration will enable the workload to be moved to other larger centres within the same geographical area and this will allow staff to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more efficiently and effectively.

East Parade Sheffield Tribunal to be integrated within Sheffield Combined Court

This will enable the workload to be moved to a larger centre and will allow the staff to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more efficiently and effectively. This integration will not impact on the current sittings at Sheffield Combined Court.

Harrogate County Court to be integrated within Harrogate Magistrates' Court

This integration is already underway and is due to complete by the end of 2015. The integration will move all magistrates', civil, family and occasional tribunals work in to a single building in Harrogate. The integration will enable more flexible and improved utilisation of the modern fit for purpose magistrates' court building and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time. The impact on customers will be minimal as the two current venues are situated next to each other in the centre of Harrogate.

Middlesbrough Tribunal Hearing Centre to be integrated within Teesside Magistrates' Court

This will enable the workload to be moved to a larger centre within five minutes walking distance of the existing hearing venue. It will allow the staff to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more efficiently and effectively.

Quayside House Newcastle Tribunal to be integrated within North Shields (Kings Court) Tribunal

In March 2015 HM Courts & Tribunals Service exercised a lease break on Quayside House in Newcastle, an expensive commercial leasehold property providing accommodation for the employment tribunal in Newcastle. With declining workload and poor utilisation of Quayside House an extension of the lease could not be justified as value for public money. We are currently working with judiciary, staff and employment tribunal users to ensure a smooth transition of work to the modern fit for purpose multi-jurisdictional centre in Kings Court, North Shields, approximately eight miles away, by September 2015.

Wilberforce Court (Hull Employment Tribunal Centre) to be integrated within Hull and Holderness Magistrates' Court and Kingston Upon Hull Combined Court

This integration will provide a more flexible and efficient use of time and resources, enabling cases to be managed more effectively in order to meet customer and workflow demands.

Consett Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Consett Magistrates' Court is one of five magistrates' courts operating in the County Durham local justice area, the others being Peterlee, Newton Aycliffe and Darlington Magistrates' Courts and the Durham Civil and Family Court. The magistrates' court is open every day but is under used. The court deals with criminal court business which is a mix of custody and non-custody work in the adult and youth courts. There are also county court sittings arranged at Consett on a regular basis; sitting three to four times a month every Wednesday.

It is proposed that the custody work from Consett Magistrates' Court is transferred to Peterlee Magistrates' Court. The non-custody work and family work will be transferred to Durham County and Family Court, although this venue does not have any cells so consideration would be given when listing criminal cases. In some instances, work may be moved to Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court if specific facilities are required.

No enabling works will be required to accommodate the transfer of work as there is sufficient capacity at the three receiving sites to meet the current and anticipated demand in the County Durham local justice area.

Should the court close it would enable the work to be moved within a single local justice area. It would also enable the other courts to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service can be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively.

Accommodation

Consett Magistrates' Court was built in 1973. The facilities are sub-standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users. There are baby changing facilities, disabled access and toilet facilities, two interview rooms, hearing enhancement facilities and refreshments are available. There are a total of five cells which are all operational.

The building is compliant with the Equality Act 2010, however the property is old and in need of repair. There is significant work which is still outstanding including extensive work to the brickwork, roof and windows. At present patch repairs are carried out as and when required. The building is also within an area that has undergone significant redevelopment in recent years and it now looks out of place with local development plans in terms of both condition and location.

Peterlee Magistrates' Court offers good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users. The facilities include baby changing facilities, disabled access and toilet facilities, six interview rooms, hearing enhancement facilities and refreshments are available. There are a total of eight cells which are all operational. Two of the courtrooms have secure docks which can be accessed from all of the cells.

Durham County and Family Court also offers good quality facilities for users. The facilities include baby changing facilities, disabled access and toilets and five interview rooms.

Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court has three courtrooms and court rooms one and two both have secure docks. There are 12 cells and these are all accessible from all three

court rooms. There is also a prison to court video link set up in one of the court rooms. Other facilities include baby changing facilities, disabled access and toilet facilities, five interview rooms, hearing enhancement facilities and a cafeteria.

Workload

Consett Magistrates' Court is open every weekday and has a total of three courtrooms which are under used. During the 2014/15 financial year, the court was utilised for approximately 25% of its capacity. One of the court rooms does not have any sittings on a Monday or a Thursday. County Court work is heard on a Wednesday three to four times a month.

Peterlee Magistrates' Court, Newton Aycliffe and Durham County and Family Court all have sufficient capacity to accommodate the hearings from Consett Magistrates' Court.

Both Peterlee Magistrates' Court and Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court are under used. Peterlee Magistrates' Court has three courtrooms and only uses two of these on a weekly basis. Newton Aycliffe has three hearing rooms and only uses two of these on a weekly basis with the exception of a Wednesday when criminal work is listed.

Durham County and Family Court has two courtrooms and two district judges' hearing rooms. The district judges' hearing rooms are well used however the courtrooms are under used and only sit family work every Tuesday in one of the courtrooms and on a Thursday in both of the courtrooms.

Location

Consett Magistrates' Court is situated 26 miles from Peterlee. The nearest train service runs from Stocksfield approximately seven miles from Consett. The travel time by train from Stocksfield to Seaham which is five miles from Peterlee is approximately one hour. The approximate cost of a return ticket is £12.40. Travel time by car is approximately 50 minutes.

Consett Magistrates' Court is situated approximately 14 miles from Durham Civil and Family Court. The nearest train service is from Stocksfield which is approximately seven miles from Consett to Durham central station and the journey takes approximately 50 minutes. The approximate cost of a return fare is £12.10. The approximate journey time by car is 20 minutes.

There is a bus service that runs from Consett bus station to Durham bus station which takes approximately 40 minutes and is an hourly service. A return ticket is £4.00. There is also a bus service that runs from Durham bus station to Peterlee bus station every 20 minutes and this takes approximately 20 minutes and a return ticket is £3.00.

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

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	69%	By Car	0-30min	30%
	30-60min	28%		30-60min	60%
	60-120min	3%		60 - 120min	10%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	25%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	31%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	18%		60-120min	69%
	>120min	23%		>120min	16%
	no data	3%		no data	3%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	67%	By Car	0-30min	29%
	30-60min	30%		30-60min	61%
	60-120min	3%		60 - 120min	10%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	25%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	30%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	19%		60-120min	70%
	>120min	22%		>120min	16%
	no data	4%		no data	2%

Staff implications

There are approximately three members of staff working at Consett Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Consett Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at Consett Magistrates' Court were approximately £174,000.

The Crown Prosecution Service, National Probation Service and Citizens Advice Bureau for witnesses all have one room each within the building, and alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

Halifax County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Halifax County Court and Family Court is one of five county courts operating in West Yorkshire, the others being at Leeds, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Bradford. The court deals with civil matters, bankruptcy, High Court, divorce and children matters.

It is proposed that the Halifax County and Family Court closes and its work is transferred to Bradford County Court at Bradford Combined Court Centre. The facilities at Halifax are sub-standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users. Some enabling works would have to be carried out to accommodate the staff and judiciary including an additional multi-purpose hearing room.

Bradford Combined Court offers good quality facilities in a modern, purpose built building for users.

Should the court close it would enable the workload to be moved to a larger court centre and will enable the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service can be delivered with courts being used more efficiently and effectively.

The population of West Yorkshire would also be able to access justice at county courts in Leeds, Huddersfield and Wakefield.

Accommodation

Halifax County Court and Family Court was built in 1872 and is a Grade II listed building. The facilities are sub-standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users. In addition to the one courtroom and district judges' hearing room there are also two waiting rooms and two interview rooms available for private consultations. There are no video link facilities at the county court. There are no private waiting facilities which can cause some difficulties with managing vulnerable witnesses where rooms are used for domestic violence or some family cases. The county court operates a counter system Monday to Friday 10am until 2pm.

Some members of the public may experience difficulties accessing the courtrooms on the first floor. The building is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 due to its listed status. It is old and no longer fit for modern day court business. The structure, roof and windows are in need of repair and due to the listed status patch repairs are currently being carried out.

The facilities at Bradford Combined Court, constructed in 1992, include 18 interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access and toilet facilities, a prayer and quiet room, baby changing facilities and a children's room, a hearing loop system, wireless internet access, a cafeteria for customers and video conferencing and prison video link facilities. The county court would require some enabling work involving the creation of a multi-purpose courtroom which would allow for more flexibility within one building with more up to date facilities. Bradford County Court has three district judges' hearing rooms and three civil and family courtrooms. These are all fully utilised. There are four district judges' that sit in the county court daily and the other two rooms are used by either a family judge or a circuit judge on a regular basis. There will be minor enabling works required to create an additional multi-purpose hearing room in the county court with an associated chambers to accommodate the work from Halifax County Court.

Workload

Halifax County Court and Family Court hosts one courtroom and two district judges' hearing rooms. One of the hearing rooms is only accessible via the courtroom from the public side of the building so it cannot be used if the court is sitting. The court can therefore only have two lists running on any given day, and during the 2014/15 financial year, utilisation was approximately 22% of its capacity.

Location

Halifax County Court is situated nine miles from Bradford. There is a frequent train and bus service between Halifax and Bradford. The travel time by train is approximately 15 minutes and by bus it is approximately 40 minutes. The approximate cost of a return train ticket is £3.90. A West Yorkshire return ticket by bus is approximately £4.70.

The journey time in 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	92%	By Car	0-30min	73%
	30-60min	8%		30-60min	25%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	2%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	58%	By Public Transport	0-30min	5%
	30-60min	39%		30-60min	78%
	60-120min	3%		60-120min	17%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are approximately 14 members of staff working at Halifax County Court and Family Court.

Other information

Halifax County Court and Family Court is a freehold property.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at Halifax County Court and Family Court were approximately £115,000.

Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' Court and Family Court

Proposal

Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' Court and Family Court is one of five magistrates' courts operating in West Yorkshire; the others being at Leeds, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Bradford. The court deals with criminal court business in the adult and youth courts as well as private law family work.

It is proposed that Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' Court and Family Court is closed and its work transferred to Bradford Magistrates' Court. Some enabling works would be needed at Bradford Magistrates' Court to accommodate the staff and judiciary.

The facilities at Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' Court and Family Court are sub-standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users. Some members of the public may experience access issues in part of the building as there are some building constraints due to its listed status. The property is old and no longer fit for modern day court business. Bradford Magistrates' Court offers good quality facilities for users.

Should the court close it would enable the work to be moved to a larger court centre and will enable the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service can be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively.

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

Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' Court and Family Court was built in 1898 and is a Grade II listed building. The facilities are sub-standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users.

The court has a total of seven court rooms, one courtroom without a dock which is used as a youth court for monitoring offences, one court room without a dock used for family hearings, and one court room is not used and has been converted into a youth café. The court has ten cells, nine of which are operational.

Some members of the public may experience access issues in parts of the building, including in the well of the court, the witness box and in the public seating areas in courts.

The court has separate waiting facilities for prosecution witnesses but no separate facilities for defence witnesses. There are prison video link facilities for intimidated and vulnerable witnesses to give their evidence via video link in one courtroom.

There are some building constraints as the court is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The property is old and no longer fit for modern day court business due to its listed status including access issues and non-compliant courtrooms.

Bradford Magistrates' Court offers good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users. These facilities include baby changing facilities, four interview rooms, hearing enhancement facilities; refreshments are available from the cafeteria on site,

video conferencing and prison video link facilities. The cells have been recently updated in April providing a total of 25 cells which will be compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Workload

The court has seven court rooms which were utilised for approximately 33% of its capacity during the 2014/15 financial year. In addition to one of the courtrooms being used as a youth café, two of the courtrooms are not in use on Mondays, one on Tuesdays, three on Thursdays and two on Fridays. Bradford Magistrates' Court has ten courtrooms. One of the courtrooms is not used and three of the other courtrooms are only used for half a day. There is sufficient capacity to accommodate the hearings at Bradford from Halifax Magistrates' Court

Location

Halifax Magistrates' Court is situated nine miles from Bradford. There are frequent train and bus services between Halifax and Bradford. The travel time by train is approximately 15 minutes and by bus approximately 40 minutes. The approximate cost of a return train ticket is £3.90 and by bus a West Yorkshire ticket return is approximately £4.70.

The journey time in a car is approximately 25 minutes.

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

Magistrates' and Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	89%	By Car	0-30min	73%
	30-60min	9%		30-60min	25%
	60-120min	2%		60 - 120min	2%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	57%	By Public Transport	0-30min	4%
	30-60min	38%		30-60min	75%
	60-120min	3%		60-120min	20%
	>120min	1%		>120min	0%
	no data	1%		no data	1%

Staff implications

There are approximately 19 members of staff working at Halifax Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' Court and Family Court is a freehold property.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at Halifax (Calderdale) Magistrates' Court and Family Court were approximately £380,000.

The Witness Service and the Crown Prosecution Service occupy part of the building, and alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court

Proposal

Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court is one of two magistrates' courts and one of two county courts operating in Cleveland, the other magistrates' court being Teesside Magistrates' Court and the other county court being Middlesbrough County Court which is part of Teesside Combined Court.

It is proposed that Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court closes and that its work is transferred to Teesside Magistrates' Court and Middlesbrough County Court. There are no enabling works required to accommodate the work from Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court.

Should the court close it would enable the workload to be moved to larger court centres and would allow the court to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and a more efficient service could then be delivered with courts being used more efficiently and effectively.

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

Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court was purpose built in 1979 as a magistrates' court and was later adapted to accommodate Hartlepool County Court.

There are five courtrooms. In addition, there are two county court district judges' hearing rooms. There are ten cells in the building with secure access to three of the five courtrooms.

The court has a prison video link and facilities for vulnerable witnesses to give their evidence via video link to one courtroom. The court has separate waiting facilities for prosecution and defence witnesses. There are interview rooms available for private consultation. Hartlepool County Court operates a counter system from 2pm until 5pm Monday to Friday. The court is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues.

Both Teesside Magistrates' Court and Teesside Combined Court Centre offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users. In order to accommodate the Social Security and Child Support Tribunal (SSCS) work from Hartlepool County Court and Middlesbrough Tribunals, reconfiguration of the hearing space at Teesside Magistrates' Court will be required to accommodate a further waiting room by removing the old fines counter and creating a disabled access door.

The facilities at Teesside Magistrates' Court include baby changing facilities, disabled access and toilet facilities and eight interview rooms. There is also hearing enhancement facilities, a cafeteria, video conference and prison video link equipment.

The facilities at Teesside Combined Court include baby changing facilities, disabled access and toilet facilities, five consultation rooms in the district judges' area and a further six on the first floor, hearing enhancement facilities, a cafeteria and video conferencing facilities. There is a counter system in the county court which operates Monday to Friday from 10am until 2pm.

Workload

Hartlepool Magistrates' Court is under used. There are five courtrooms and two of these are used for crime work. Family work is listed in one of the courtrooms every Tuesday. One of the courtrooms is used for tribunal hearings on an ad hoc basis and the remaining courtroom is not used as the facilities are out of date.

There are 16 courtrooms at Teesside Magistrates' Court and these are not fully used so there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the hearings from Hartlepool Magistrates' Court. One courtroom is currently used for training purposes and three of the courtrooms are used for tribunal hearings on an ad hoc basis.

In Hartlepool County Court there are two district judges' hearing rooms. Both district judges' hearing rooms are not used on a Monday or a Thursday. The court rooms allocated to the county court in Teesside Combined Court are not fully used so there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the hearings from Hartlepool County Court.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court was utilised at approximately 47% of its capacity.

Location

Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court is situated approximately 14 miles from Middlesbrough and there are excellent road, rail and bus links. There are frequent bus and train services to Middlesbrough with journey times by train of approximately 30 minutes and by bus approximately 45 minutes. The approximate cost of a return rail ticket is £4.50 and a return bus ticket costs £7.70 (bus north east all zone tickets).

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	ime	%	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	90%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	9%		30-60min	7%
	60-120min	0%		60-120min	91%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	1%		no data	2%

Family workload:

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	90%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	9%		30-60min	7%
	60-120min	0%		60-120min	91%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	1%		no data	2%

County workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	79%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	21%
	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	0%
	30-60min	31%		30-60min	5%
	60-120min	1%		60-120min	92%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	1%		no data	3%

Staff implications

There are approximately eight members of staff working at Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and seven full-time members of staff working at Hartlepool County Court.

Other information

Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court is a leasehold property and has a 99 year lease until 2075.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at Hartlepool Magistrates' Court and County Court were approximately £345,000.

Morpeth County Court

Proposal

Morpeth County Court is one of six county courts operating in Northumbria, the others being at Gateshead, Newcastle, North Shields, South Shields, and Sunderland. The courthouse is situated in Morpeth and covers the North and South East parts of Northumberland. There are regular sittings at both Morpeth County Court and Berwick upon Tweed Courthouse. All administration is based in Morpeth County Court.

It is proposed that Morpeth County Court closes and its work is transferred to Newcastle County Court with the exception of regular hearings at Berwick upon Tweed Courthouse which will continue to be administered from Newcastle County Court. Morpeth County Court is reasonably fit for purpose however due to a break in the lease in 2017 the proposed move would enable the work to be moved to a larger court centre and would allow the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and efficient service can be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively.

Newcastle County Court is located within Newcastle Combined Court and offers good quality facilities in a modern, purpose built building for users. The change will have no impact on existing sittings at Newcastle County Court.

The population of Northumberland would also be able to access North Shields County Court, with local hearings continuing at Berwick upon Tweed courthouse and if required at South East Northumberland Magistrates' Court (Bedlington), which is situated five miles from Morpeth.

Accommodation

Morpeth County Court occupies the upper floors of a building owned by the Department for Work and Pensions, who occupy the ground floor. The building is adequate but under used.

The accommodation comprises of one civil courtroom and one district judges' hearing room. There are two interview rooms available for private consultations. There is a counter system which operates by prior appointment only. Although the car parking is not fully secure, there is a dedicated entrance for staff and the judiciary.

Newcastle Combined Court, which opened in 1990, is a much larger centre fit for modern day HM Courts & Tribunals business. Facilities include; interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access, parking, toilet and baby changing facilities, a hearing loop system, wireless internet access and a cafeteria for customers. There is sufficient appropriate accommodation for the judiciary, public and staff at Newcastle to accommodate the move from Morpeth County Court. There is a bailiff counter operating Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm. The court counter is open 10am until 4pm Monday to Friday by prior appointment only.

The county court also offers a service called the Personal Service Unit (PSU) which is an independent service offering support to people going through the court process without legal representation. They do not provide legal advice but they do provide practical guidance and/or emotional support. The service is free, independent and confidential and is offered to anyone who asks. The office is open between 9.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

Workload

There are two hearing rooms at Morpeth County Court, and these were used for approximately 44% of their capacity during the 2014/15 financial year. The court operates on a four weekly rota. The district judges' hearing rooms are only used three weeks out of four on a Friday. The civil courtroom is used every day during the four week period except Wednesday and Thursday afternoon during the first two weeks. Newcastle County Court is a larger court centre with more flexibility to accommodate the hearings from Morpeth County court.

Location

Morpeth County Court is situated approximately 17 miles from Newcastle. There is a frequent train and bus service between Morpeth and Newcastle. The travel time by train is approximately 20 minutes and by bus is approximately 35 minutes. The approximate cost of a return ticket is £6.60 by train and is £7.00 by bus. The journey time by car is approximately 30 minutes.

The main towns in Northumberland are all served by a frequent bus service to Newcastle. Journey times to South East Northumberland are between 30 minutes and one hour.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	72%	By Car	0-30min	23%
	30-60min	18%		30-60min	60%
	60-120min	10%		60 - 120min	17%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	15%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	41%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	25%		60-120min	70%
	>120min	17%		>120min	14%
	no data	2%		no data	4%

Staff implications

There are approximately seven members of staff working at Morpeth County Court.

Other information

The building is occupied under a Memorandum of Term of Occupation (MOTO) with the Department of Work and Pensions.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at Morpeth County Court were approximately £255,000.

Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is one of four magistrates' courts and one of four county courts operating in South Yorkshire; the others being at Doncaster, Sheffield and Barnsley. The court deals with criminal work in the adult and youth courts as well as civil and family work.

It is proposed that Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is closed, its criminal work transferred to Sheffield Magistrates' Court and the county court work transferred to Sheffield County Court. This would enable the workload to be moved to larger court centres and will allow the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service can be delivered with courts being used more efficiently and effectively.

Although there is sufficient capacity to meet the current and anticipated workload demand from Rotherham, some enabling works are required at Sheffield Combined Court to accommodate an additional district judges' hearing room.

Both Sheffield Magistrates' Court and Sheffield Combined Court Centre offer good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

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

Rotherham Magistrates' Court was built in 1994. The court has ten courtrooms. In addition, there are two county court district judges' chambers. There are 11 cells in the building with secure access to eight of the ten courtrooms.

The court has no prison video link but has facilities for vulnerable witnesses to give their evidence via video link to two courtrooms. The court has separate waiting facilities for prosecution witnesses but no separate waiting facilities for defence witnesses. There are interview rooms available for private consultation. Rotherham County Court and Family Court operates a counter system from 10am until 2pm.

The court is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues. Both Sheffield Magistrates' Court and Sheffield Combined Court Centre offer good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

The facilities at Sheffield Combined Court include interview rooms for private consultations, disabled access, toilet facilities, baby changing facilities, a hearing loop system, wireless internet access and a cafeteria. The county court also accommodates a Personal Service Unit (PSU) which is an independent charity where assistance is provided to court users to complete court forms. The service is free and available to everyone who asks.

Sheffield County Court offers a counter system which operates from Monday to Friday 10am until 2pm by prior appointment only. Sheffield Magistrates' Court has 15 cells which are all operational. There are a total of 16 courtrooms. The facilities include baby changing facilities, disabled access and toilets, private interview rooms, portable induction hearing loops, video conferencing, video link facilities and a cafeteria located on the ground floor.

Sheffield Magistrates' Court also accommodates a support group - Addiction Team - who are located on the lower ground floor.

Workload

There are ten courtrooms and two district judges' hearing rooms at Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court. The two district judges' hearing rooms are not fit for purpose due to their size and are not currently used for hearings. The court rooms that adjoin the district judges' hearing rooms are used for county court hearings. However, one of these courtrooms is only used on Tuesdays for trials and possession lists, and on Wednesdays it is used for the coroner's court. Two of the courtrooms are not used unless there is a requirement to list a tribunal hearing once or twice during the month.

During the 2014/15 financial year, utilisation at the court was approximately 32% of its capacity.

Sheffield Magistrates' Court has 16 court rooms and five of the courtrooms are currently under used. All court rooms are fit for purpose and there is sufficient capacity to move criminal work into Sheffield Magistrates' Court from Rotherham.

Sheffield County Court at Sheffield Combined Court Centre will require some enabling works to accommodate an additional hearing room; this will provide flexibility within the court building with more up to date facilities.

Location

Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is situated nine miles from Sheffield and there are excellent road, rail and bus links.

There are frequent bus and train services to Sheffield with journey times by train of approximately 20 minutes and by bus of approximately 30 minutes. The approximate cost of a return rail ticket £3.80. A return First Day Ticket by bus costs approximately £3.90. The journey time by car is approximately 20 minutes.

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

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	78%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	22%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	41%	By Public Transport	0-30min	5%
	30-60min	54%		30-60min	59%
	60-120min	5%		60-120min	36%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	78%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	22%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	41%	By Public Transport	0-30min	5%
	30-60min	54%		30-60min	59%
	60-120min	5%		60-120min	36%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

County workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	79%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	21%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	40%	By Public Transport	0-30min	6%
	30-60min	52%		30-60min	59%
	60-120min	8%		60-120min	35%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are approximately 18 members of staff working at Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court.

Other information

Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is freehold and forms part of a civic complex.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at Rotherham Magistrates', County Court and Family Court were approximately £640,000.

The Crown Prosecution Service, National Probation Service, Citizens Advice Bureau and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) have rooms allocated within the building. Alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is one of four magistrates' and three county courts operating in Humberside, the other magistrates' courts being at Beverley, Grimsby and Hull and the other county courts being at Hull and Grimsby. The court deals with criminal business in the adult and youth courts as well as civil business, district registry, bankruptcy, adoptions, and family work.

It is proposed that Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court closes and its work is transferred to Grimsby Magistrates' and Grimsby Combined Court. Overall utilisation is low, specifically in relation to courtrooms used by the magistrates' business. Should the court close it would enable the workload to be moved to larger court centres and would allow the court to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service can then be delivered with courts being used more efficiently and effectively.

There will be some enabling works required at the combined court to create additional family hearing capacity.

The main courthouse at Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is compliant with the Equality Act 2010. However, the administrative centre which forms part of the accommodation is not.

Grimsby Magistrates' Court and Grimsby Combined Court Centre offer good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals service users.

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

Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court was purpose built as a magistrates' court and later adapted to accommodate Scunthorpe County Court. Two properties now make up Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court. One of these buildings is the administration centre known as Scunthorpe Charter Hall.

The court comprises three courtrooms and one hearing room. There is also one county court district judge's chambers. There are 14 cells in the building with secure access to three of the four courtrooms. The cells belong to Scunthorpe Police Station.

The court has prison to court video link and has facilities for vulnerable witnesses to give their evidence via video link to two courtrooms. Scunthorpe County Court and Family Court operates a counter system open from 10am until 2pm Monday to Friday.

The court does not have separate waiting facilities for prosecution and defence witnesses. There are interview rooms available for private consultation.

The main courthouse is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues. However Scunthorpe Charter Hall is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010

The facilities at both Grimsby Combined Court and Grimsby Magistrates' Court are good and include interview rooms for private consultations, five at the combined court and two at the magistrates' court, disabled access, parking and toilet facilities, baby changing facilities, a hearing loop system and wireless internet access. Grimsby Combined Court operates a counter system Monday to Friday open from 10am until 2pm. There is also free public parking at/or nearby Grimsby Magistrates' Court. A further hearing room will be created to consolidate all family and civil work within Grimsby Combined Court in the old disused cafeteria area. This area already has public toilet facilities.

Workload

There are four courtrooms at Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court, which were utilised at approximately 30% of their capacity during the 2014/15 financial year.

One of the courtrooms deals with some criminal lists and video link cases on Wednesday afternoons only. Therefore the court room is not used for the remainder of the week. Another court room is used for family work on Monday mornings and Friday mornings only and is not used for the remainder of the week.

The district judges' hearing room is used more effectively with the exception of Thursdays every third week.

Grimsby Magistrates' Court currently has the capacity to accommodate hearings from Scunthorpe Magistrates' Court. Grimsby Combined Court will have the capacity to accommodate hearings from Scunthorpe County Court and Family Court once the enabling works to create an additional courtroom have been undertaken.

Location

Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is situated 28 miles from Grimsby and there are excellent road and rail links.

There is a frequent train service to Grimsby with journey times by train of approximately 35 minutes. The approximate cost of a return rail ticket is £15.60 and the cost of a bus day ticket is £8.50. The approximate time of a bus journey is 50 minutes

The journey time by car is approximately 40 minutes.

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

Magistrates' and Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	76%	By Car	0-30min	2%
	30-60min	24%		30-60min	74%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	23%
By Public Transport	0-30min	45%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	20%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	25%		60-120min	55%
	>120min	6%		>120min	13%
	no data	4%		no data	32%

County workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	74%	By Car	0-30min	2%
	30-60min	26%		30-60min	75%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	22%
By Public Transport	0-30min	44%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	20%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	26%		60-120min	54%
	>120min	7%		>120min	16%
	no data	3%		no data	30%

Staff implications

There are approximately 16 members of staff working at Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court.

Other information

The main Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court building is leasehold and the landlords are the Humberside Police with a 999 year old lease. Scunthorpe Charter Hall Administration Centre is Freehold.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at Scunthorpe Magistrates', County Court and Family Court were approximately £268,000.

The National Probation Service and Citizens Advice Bureau occupy the building on a daily basis, and the Youth Offending Team once a week. Alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

Wakefield Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Wakefield Magistrates' Court is one of five magistrates' courts operating in West Yorkshire the others being in Leeds, Huddersfield, Bradford and Halifax. The court deals with criminal court business in the adult and youth courts. From mid-January 2013, public law and private law work in the Family Court moved to the new Wakefield Civil Justice Centre.

It is proposed that Wakefield Magistrates' Court closes and the criminal work moves to Leeds Magistrates' Court where there is ample accommodation for staff and hearings. There are 21 courtrooms at Leeds Magistrates' Court, with only ten to 12 being used on a daily basis at present. There will be no enabling works required to accommodate the workload from Wakefield.

The facilities at Wakefield Magistrates' Court are sub-standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users. The building is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010 due to its listed status and the courtroom accommodation, in particular, is in need of modernisation. The building has five courtrooms and is currently well used, however there is sufficient capacity at Leeds and Wakefield Magistrates' Court offers poor standards of accommodation.

Leeds Magistrates' Court offers excellent quality facilities in a modern purpose built building for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

In the 2010 Court Estate Reform Programme proposals, it was agreed that Pontefract Magistrates' Court would close and the work would move to Wakefield Magistrates' Court. This took place in March 2013 and Wakefield Magistrates' Court now houses some of the staff and work from Pontefract. A small number of the staff were accommodated at Leeds Magistrates' Court. As part of this arrangement, the family work from both Pontefract and Wakefield Magistrates' Courts was to be dealt with within the new Wakefield Civil Justice Centre which opened in January 2013. More recently with the introduction of the single Family Court in April 2014, all issue of family proceedings are now dealt with at Leeds County Court. Wakefield Civil Justice Centre is still used as a hearing centre for the Family Court.

The closure of Wakefield Magistrates' Court was not considered as part of the estate reform proposals in 2010 as at that time the workload from both Wakefield and Pontefract could not be accommodated in Leeds Magistrates' Court. Since 2010 reductions in magistrates' court criminal work at both Pontefract and Wakefield and the relocation of the family court work, now allows for Wakefield Magistrates' Court to be considered as part of these proposals.

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

Wakefield Magistrates' Court was built in 1777 and is a listed building. The accommodation comprises of five courtrooms, four formal courtrooms and one informal courtroom. The facilities are sub-standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users. The building is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010 due to its listed status and the courtroom accommodation in particular, is in need of modernisation. The property is

old and is no longer fit for use. There are constant maintenance issues with equipment in particular relating to the fire alarm system and courtroom security. The system is old and in need of repair. The structure, roof and windows are also in need of repair and due to the listed status patch repairs are currently being carried out.

Access to the building is difficult for some people with a disability and there is no access to the four courtrooms on the first floor for people with some disabilities. The only courtroom on the ground floor is usually used for family and youth courts. The cell facilities are in poor condition and have limited capacity.

The court has separate waiting facilities for prosecution witnesses but no separate facilities for defence witnesses. Wakefield Magistrates' Court has prison video link facilities and facilities for vulnerable witnesses to give their evidence via video link in one courtroom. The court has interview rooms available for private consultation.

Leeds Magistrates' Court offers excellent quality facilities in a modern purpose built building for users. The facilities at Leeds Magistrates' Court include interview rooms for private consultations, video link facilities, disabled access and toilet facilities, baby changing facilities, hearing enhancement facilities, parking for disabled customers and refreshment facilities for all court users.

Workload

Wakefield Magistrates' Court has five courtrooms and was utilised at approximately 56% of its capacity during the 2014/15 financial year.

Leeds Magistrates' Court has 21 courtrooms however only half of these are fully used with three of the courtrooms used currently as meeting venues. There is capacity to accommodate hearings from Wakefield Magistrates' Court to ensure flexibility in a larger centre with better facilities.

Location

Wakefield Magistrates' Court is situated 12.5 miles from Leeds. There is a frequent train and bus service between Wakefield and Leeds. The travel time by train is approximately 20 minutes and by bus approximately 35 minutes.

Pontefract is situated 17 miles from Leeds. There is a frequent train via Wakefield between Pontefract and Leeds via Wakefield with a journey time of approximately 50 minutes. There is a frequent direct bus service to Leeds from Pontefract with a journey time of approximately 50 minutes.

The cost of a return train ticket from Pontefract to Leeds is £3.90. A West Yorkshire ticket can be purchased for return travel by bus and costs £4.70. The cost of a return train ticket from Wakefield to Leeds is £5.90. A West Yorkshire ticket can be purchased for return travel by bus and costs £4.70.

The journey time by car is approximately 25 minutes from Wakefield and 35 minutes from Pontefract.

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

Magistrates' and Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	86%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	14%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	35%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	51%		30-60min	53%
	60-120min	14%		60-120min	47%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are approximately 28 members of staff working at Wakefield Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Wakefield Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

During the 2014/15 financial year, operating costs at Wakefield Magistrates' Court were approximately £268,000.

Witness Service, National Probation Service and the Youth Offending Team occupy part of the building, and alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

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**

Tel: 0161 240 5021

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 (please see details above).

Publication of response

The response to this consultation exercise will be available on-line at www.gov.uk/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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**Alternative format version of this report are available on
request estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk**