

Press release: Liverpool at the forefront of justice transformation

The Crown Court is the first in the country to pilot new software that will streamline and speed up hearings, helping to avoid unnecessary delays in the courtroom. The new system is key to delivering a more effective, efficient and high performing courts service as part of the government's reform agenda which allows Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and police files to be shared between agencies in one easy to access database.

In Liverpool, the pilot was established with the close co-operation of Merseyside Police, Mersey Cheshire CPS and HMCTS and lessons learnt during user testing will play a vital part in its wider adoption.

Justice minister Lucy Frazer said:

Liverpool courts have been at the forefront of cutting edge technology to improve efficiency, speed up justice and provide value for money for the taxpayer.

I was delighted to see for myself the progress being made towards the modernisation of our justice system, which will make our courts fit for the digital age.

Minister Frazer spent the day at Liverpool Magistrates and Crown Court, as well as the Civil and Family court where she met court staff and the judiciary, and, in addition to the Common Operating Platform, was able to see a live demonstration of a second digital system designed to record sentences in real time.

Results of 18,000 cases a week are uploaded using the Digital Mark Up, which went live at every magistrates' court across England and Wales in May, and allows a legal advisor to immediately record the outcome of a hearing, ensuring swift justice. This eliminates the need for a lengthy paper process, and means results can be shared immediately with the CPS and police, therefore freeing up staff to concentrate on the most important matters.

The minister also spent time in the Merseyside Centralised Domestic Violence Court – a dedicated court dealing with all cases of domestic abuse at their first hearing in the magistrates' court as swiftly and sensitively as possible, lessening the impact on the victim.

Today's digital demonstrations follow earlier advances in 2015 which saw Liverpool Magistrates' and Crown Courts integrated into a single centre for crime – the first of its scale in England and Wales, and the early adoption of the Digital Case System in the Crown Court. This system enables the judiciary and other parties in Liverpool to prepare, present and share case

papers in a digital format, thereby reducing delays.

The Government is investing £1 billion in reforming and modernising courts, which has already delivered:

- A fully paperless system in conjunction with Transport for London – which means thousands of cases involving fare evasion are dealt with more swiftly and effectively.
- An online system which enables court staff to prepare case files and access them digitally in a courtroom during a hearing – saving 68 million pages of paper.
- The ability for those convicted of minor motoring offences to make their initial plea online. 1500 pleas are dealt with online every week. Court staff and the police automatically receive the completed online plea form as soon as the defendant has submitted it, reducing delays.

In the civil courts people can now:

- Make a small money claim online – with over 3,000 claims issued in the first month, cases moving through more quickly, and user satisfaction over 80% during the pre-launch pilot.
- Apply for a divorce online – which has cut errors in application forms from 40% to less than 1%, saving people time and trouble during a traumatic time.
- Apply for probate online – which has also cut errors, speeds up the process, and has a satisfaction rate of more than 90%.