



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Lord Jackson
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ Ref: TN120687

22 January 2025

Dear Lord Jackson,

Lords Oral Question - Wednesday 15 January

Following the question to the Government by Baroness Hazarika on 15 January, I am writing to provide further information in response to supplementary questions asked by Peers.

In response to the initial question asked by Baroness Hazarika, I outlined the work the Government has undertaken to tackle court backlogs. This Government is committed to bearing down on the backlog but the challenge we face to do so is significant. We have taken action to reduce the rate of caseload growth, through funding 108,500 sitting days at the Crown Court this financial year and extending magistrates' court sentencing powers. However, we know we must go further and do things differently, which is why the Lord Chancellor has appointed Sir Brian Leveson to lead an Independent Review of the Criminal Courts. The Review will consider how the criminal courts could be reformed to ensure cases are dealt with more proportionately and will consider the efficiency and timeliness of court processes. The recommendations provided will help us to deliver a more efficient and effective criminal court system and improved timeliness for victims, witnesses and defendants.

Lord Jackson, in response to your question regarding the single justice procedure (SJP) and whether related issues will be considered as part of the ongoing Review, this issue will not be covered in the Review. The focus of the Review is the Crown Court, and options that will help this Government bear down on the backlog and deliver swifter access to justice across the criminal courts. As an issue specific to the magistrates' courts, the scope of the Review does not extend to the SJP. However, ensuring there are adequate safeguards to support vulnerable defendants accessing justice is vital. There is work ongoing in this space to redesign the notice that is sent to defendants to inform them of their prosecution, to make it easier for defendants to understand both the SJP process and their rights relating to it. The Government also intends to launch a consultation shortly on the oversight and regulation of private prosecutors, which will include consideration of the SJP.

I hope the above responses prove useful. I will place a copy of this letter in the House Library.

Kind regards,

LORD PONSONBY OF SHULBREDE