

Andy Slaughter MP
Chair of the Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: 122621

27 March 2025

Dear Andy,

PRIVATE LAW PATHFINDER PROCESS EVALUATION AND PROGRAMME UPDATE

I am writing to inform you that today we have published two documents about the Private Law Pathfinder Programme. One is a Process Evaluation and Exploratory Financial Analysis and the other is a delivery update.

The Pathfinder pilot aims to improve the court experience and outcomes for children and parents involved in private family law proceedings, including those who have experience of domestic abuse. The initial pilot was designed in response to recommendation from the Harm Panel report to reform private law by trialling a more problem-solving, investigative approach which enhances the voice of the child and better supports victims of domestic abuse and other harms.

The pilot launched in Dorset and North Wales in February 2022. It expanded to South-East Wales in April 2024, Birmingham in May 2024 and Mid and West Wales on 3 March. The pilot will next launch in West Yorkshire on 3 June. I am very pleased that the model is now operational across all of Wales and that, as we announced publicly earlier this year, we have funding to expand into additional court areas later in 2025 in order that more families can benefit from this model.

Figures published in February showed that cases in the first two pilot areas were resolved 11 weeks faster and the backlog of cases reduced by over 50 per cent.

The process evaluation examined how the model works at an operational level from the perspectives of operational staff, the judiciary and magistrates in the first two Pathfinder sites. It sought to explore what has worked well, critical components of the model required for successful implementation, lessons learned and good practice in the two pilot areas. The evaluation also included an exploratory financial analysis which compared the cost of delivering Pathfinder in the first two pilot areas to delivering the Child Arrangements Programme in two comparator areas.

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The delivery update provides an overview of refinements and developments to the pilot's model, expansion plans for the 2025/26 financial year, planned next steps, and process maps of the Pathfinder system and the Child Arrangement Programme it is being piloted to replace.

I will place a copy of the Process Evaluation and Exploratory Financial Analysis and this letter in the library of the house.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ponsonby', is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

LORD PONSONBY OF SHULBREDE

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