

HM Courts & Tribunals Service Business Plan

2012–2013

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introduction

by the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals

We are pleased to introduce the 2012-13 Business Plan for HM Courts and Tribunals Service.

Courts and Tribunals are at the centre of the justice system - one that the public relies on in order to be able to enforce their rights and to uphold the rule of law.

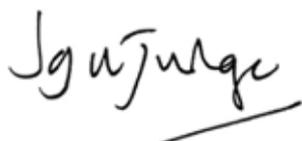
Bringing their administration together last year into a unified service was therefore intended not just to maximise efficiency and minimise waste at a time of financial austerity but, more fundamentally, to improve the service they provide the public.

We are pleased to record that, in its first year HM Courts & Tribunals Service has made considerable progress towards unifying the administrative support to our courts and tribunals, whilst also seeking to reduce its costs. 2012-13 will hopefully build on the successes of that first year.

We look forward to continuing our support of HM Courts & Tribunals Service to enable the efficient and effective administration of justice in Courts and Tribunals.



The Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP
Lord Chancellor
and Secretary of State for Justice



The Rt Hon Lord Judge
Lord Chief Justice of
England and Wales



The Rt Hon Sir Robert Carnwath CVO
Senior President of Tribunals

The role of the Board

The Board is responsible for overseeing the leadership and direction of HM Courts & Tribunals Service in delivering the aim and objectives set by the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice. The Board will specifically:

- approve the allocation of the annual budget and any significant in-year changes to it;
- monitor the delivery of strategic objectives and performance targets;
- support the establishment and maintenance of a strong working relationship between the staff of HM Courts & Tribunals Service and the judiciary at all levels;
- approve the agency's corporate governance framework and controls, and monitor their operation;
- ensure that the planning, performance and financial management of the agency is carried out efficiently and effectively and with openness and transparency in relation to the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice;
- contribute to the development of and approve the strategic plans and the annual business plan for the agency;
- advise, provide challenge and scrutiny and, where necessary, give direction to the Chief Executive in relation to the strategy of the agency, the overall delivery of its business plan and the key risks relating to the operation of the agency.

This business plan reflects the strategic direction set out by the Board and has been approved in accordance with its governance responsibilities.



foreword

by Peter Handcock,
Chief Executive of
HM Courts & Tribunals Service

The difficult economic climate continues to set the context for our Business Plan in 2012-13. At the same time, we are facing increasing demand for our services that come from changes elsewhere in public service as a result of these budgetary pressures.

Before I reflect on the key activities for the next financial year, I want to praise staff across the organisation for the commitment that they show every day and for the constructive and positive way in which they are embracing the changes we are making.

Our commitment to Lean ways of working means that we will continue to embed a culture of continuous improvement across the organisation. We will use the expertise of our front line staff to reduce waste, standardise our services, and keep focused on our business priorities. This provides a strong basis from which to continue to implement our plans to improve the services for our users.

Lean thinking underpins our new organisational structure which removes unnecessary layers of management and duplication. The implementation of the full model in 2012-13, including a new structure for the management of Legal Services, will make an important contribution to the significant financial savings that are expected of us. For our users and the taxpayer the long term benefit is that management are now much closer to courts and tribunals users. This means we are now better able to identify - and respond to - local needs.

Courts and tribunals users should be able to expect the same quality of service, regardless of where

they live in the country. By standardising the processes for the administration of some of our key services we hope to improve the experience of those who use our services. Building on existing work in courts and tribunals, in 2012-13 we will be examining how to extend the benefits of this approach to other key business processes in civil and family courts.

Making better use of information technology continues to drive our efforts to improve services. In the next year we expect to make significant progress towards introducing fully digital hearings in criminal courts. We are also harnessing our existing ICT capabilities to develop further the 'County Court Money Claim Centre' to create efficiencies through centralising certain processes.

All of this work will provide the building blocks for embedding the future strategic vision of a more customer focused, efficient operating model which provides sufficient flexibility to deal with the challenges we face.

The reforms and activities in this plan are part of the wider MoJ Transforming Justice programme, to deliver a justice system which is more effective, less costly, and more responsive to the public. As part of the Ministry of Justice, we have a key role to play in implementing this ambitious reform agenda, while continuing to provide a high quality service working with our partners and stakeholders.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Handcock". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Peter Handcock CBE
Chief Executive of HM Courts & Tribunals Service

section 1

Setting the Scene

This plan sets out the business priorities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service and outlines how we will deliver our business objectives for the year 2012-13.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service is an agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and operates on the basis of a partnership between the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals.

We provide the system of support for the administration of the business of the courts in England and Wales and those tribunals for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible. Our aim is to run an efficient and effective courts and tribunals system, enabling the rule of law to be upheld, and providing access to justice for all.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service – One Year On

HM Courts & Tribunals Service was established on 1 April 2011 and our first year has seen significant progress within the agency. We have implemented a new operating structure, delivering significant financial savings by removing unnecessary management layers and duplication of work, while continuing to deliver a high quality service to courts and tribunal users.

We have maintained business as usual during a time of considerable challenge – following the civil unrest last August, staff, Magistrates and the Judiciary up and down the country worked around the clock to provide extended court sittings to deal with the unprecedented number of cases as swiftly as possible. Colleagues in the tribunals have also risen to the challenge of dealing with the significant year on year increase in workload in the SCS jurisdiction. As well as delivering our daily business, we have progressed the commitments made in the HM Courts & Tribunals four year business plan. The Court Estates Rationalisation Programme is on track and forms part of our strategy to modernise and improve the use of courts in England and Wales. By October 2012 we will have completed the first phase of the court estate rationalisation resulting in an estimated saving of £96.9m during the current Spending Review period. We have established a national business centre and contact centre to process people’s money claims more efficiently. In addition, we have published new voluntary standards for Enforcement Officers to ensure that people are protected from unsound or unfair methods, while at the same time making sure that fines are still collected fairly.

The Year Ahead

The biggest challenge in 2012-13 will be to ensure we continue to deliver our core services to the highest standards. Like the rest of Government we are operating under strict financial constraints and with fewer resources.

We will continue to identify ways to improve and simplify our service to customers, and introduce leaner ways of working that reduce waste and meet the challenge to save money. A major part of this will be the continued development and subsequent publication of our future operating strategy during 2012.

In addition, during the coming year work will include the development and streamlining of our IT capability, the modernisation of the summons process in the magistrates' courts, improvement of the fines collection process, and the development of options on protection against aggressive bailiffs ahead of publically consulting on these proposals.

We will work with Welsh Government officials, the judiciary in Wales and Wales based stakeholders to ensure the effective and timely implementation of any HM Courts & Tribunals Service business change in Wales that may impact upon devolved services or have Welsh language implications.

Similarly, we will continue to work with colleagues in the MoJ, the Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive and the judiciary in those areas, to ensure the effective delivery of tribunal business in Scotland and Northern Ireland and any change to that business which is agreed.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service has committed to invest in all of our staff at every level.

We will ensure that they receive the training they need to equip them with the skills required in the new operating structure. This will enable and encourage them to meet the high standards we expect of our staff in the challenging times ahead.

Ministry of Justice Vision for Transforming Justice

The MoJ's objective is to deliver a transformed justice system and a transformed department that is more effective, less costly and more responsive. As a Department, we have a bold agenda for reform. We want to see a justice system which punishes the guilty, protects our liberties and the independence of the judiciary, and introduce a revolution in the rehabilitation of offenders.

The Department will provide a clear sentencing framework, which will punish those who break the law, and help reduce re-offending. Prisons will be places where meaningful work and opportunities to reform are the expectation, not a matter of choice. We will provide a legal aid system that supports those who need it most. We will encourage more people to settle disputes without resorting to the courts. There will be better law, we will create a new relationship between the citizen and state that protects those fundamental values and liberties that underpin our society.

To do this the Department needs to work differently. Our aim will be to ensure that justice services are provided by whoever can most effectively and efficiently meet public demand. These ambitions will support the delivery of more effective and efficient services which are more responsive to public need.

Our Strategic Objectives

The Framework Document, which sets out the agreement reached between the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals for the operation of HM Courts & Tribunals, sets out five key strategic objectives for the agency; namely to:

- Provide the supporting administration for a fair, efficient and accessible courts and tribunal system;
- Support an independent judiciary in the administration of justice;
- Drive continuous improvement of performance and efficiency across all aspects of the administration of the courts and tribunals;
- Collaborate effectively with other justice organisations and agencies, including the legal professions, to improve access to justice;
- Work with Government departments and agencies, as appropriate, to improve the quality and timeliness of their decision making in order to reduce the number of cases coming before courts and tribunals.

Resources

Our strategic objectives will enable us to prioritise how we spend the resource budget of £1,083m (net of income) allocated for 2012–2013. This allocation represents a 5% reduction on a like-for-like basis (including inflationary and other pressures of 7%) from 2011–12 and requires HM Courts & Tribunals Service to achieve savings of around £40m, in addition to the £92m we had planned to achieve.

Table 1 sets out our resources against the key expenditure areas. The non staff costs include items such as rent/rates, IT/telecoms, utilities and general office expenses such as printing and postage.

Table 1 – HM Courts & Tribunals¹ Service Budget 2012–13

Resources	2011–12 Budget	2012–13 Budget
<i>Category</i>		
Gross Expenditure	£m	£m
Staff costs	583.2	529.9
Judicial costs	456.6	462.1
Non staff costs	657.6	658.2
Total Expenditure	1,697.4	1,650.2
Less:		
Income	585.1	567.2
Net Expenditure	1,112.3	1,083.0
Non Cash ²	124.8	122.2
Capital ³	117.5	105.0

¹Within the Tribunals jurisdictions, the costs are net of contributions from other government departments.

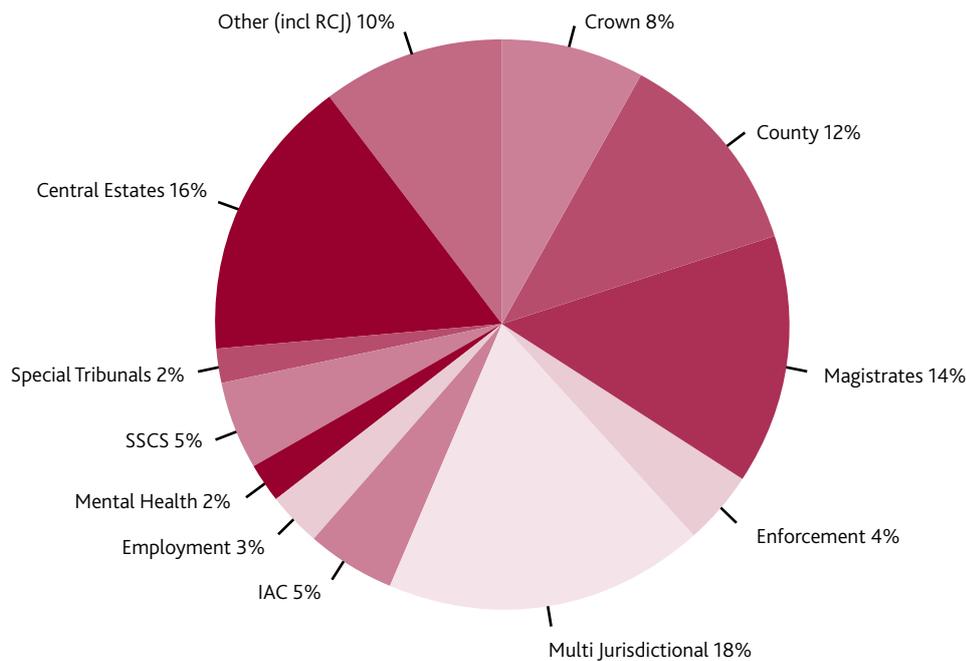
²Non cash costs cover items such as depreciation.

³The capital position is gross and does not include any capital disposals.

Table 2 – Distribution of allocation across Regions

	2011-12	2012-13
Gross Expenditure	£m	£m
London Region	295.4	277.6
South East Region	129.1	118.4
South West Region	74.4	69.0
Wales	58.0	56.2
Midlands Region	144.5	134.7
North West Region	124.1	115.4
North East Region	126.9	118.8
Tribunals Scotland	25.1	25.4
Centralised Frontline ⁴	386.1	397.5
Central Estates	253.8	263.1
HQ	80.0	74.1
Total Expenditure	1,697.4	1,650.2
Less: Income	585.1	567.2
	1,112.3	1,083.0

Chart 1 Distribution of allocation by Jurisdiction⁵



⁴Centralised Frontline includes judicial salaries, Enforcement; Tribunals managed centrally and provision payments.

⁵Multi-Jurisdiction contains the judicial salaries, combined courts and regional estates costs for all jurisdictions (e.g. maintenance). SCS - Social Security and Child Support; MH - Mental Health; ET - Employment Tribunals IAC - Immigration and Asylum Chamber, RCJ - Royal Courts of Justice.

As part of the MoJ’s Open Data Strategy and the Government’s Transparency Agenda, we will publish, over the coming year, information about the operation of the courts and tribunals to assist the public in understanding how we are performing. These indicators, listed in table 3

below, will identify service inputs and the impact on our performance. Table 3 also sets out what we will deliver with our resources by setting out anticipated workload levels for the courts and tribunals in the 2012-13 financial year.

Table 3 – Anticipated workload of our courts and tribunals

Workload Indicators	Input Indicators	Impact indicators
Crown Court		
All cases: 149,700 Of which: Trials: 95,600	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and judicial cost per sitting day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of weeks it takes to commence trial cases from receipt in the Crown Court
Magistrates’ Court		
All Cases: 1,633,300 Of which: Indictable: 459,600 Summary: 1,173,700	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and judicial cost per sitting day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of weeks it takes to complete all cases from first listing The number of days it takes to result court registers The collection rate for financial penalties
Tribunals		
All tribunals: 881,100 Of which: Social Security & Child Support: 483,400 Employment: 204,600 Immigration and Asylum: 123,100 Mental Health : 28,300 Other: 41,700	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost of tribunals (judicial and administrative) Total tribunals costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of weeks it takes to dispose of cases across each of the largest four jurisdictions: Social Security & Child Support Employment Immigration and Asylum Mental Health
Civil and Family Justice		
Civil ⁶ All cases: 1,454,300 Money Claims:1,091,100 Repossession: 193,400 Other Civil: 110,900 Insolvency: 58,900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and judicial cost per sitting day 	Civil – The number of weeks it takes to hear cases from when the claim was received at court

⁶Previously, totals for small claim, fast track & multi track hearings were shown, but the great majority of cases do not progress to a final hearing; the new figures show the number of cases starting, by type of case, and cover all Civil caseload and provide a more robust indication of the work that passes through the civil courts.

Family⁷

All cases: 189,200

of which -

Adoption: 7,000

Public Law Children Act: 11,600

Private Law Children Act: 36,900

Family Law Act: 15,800

Divorce without ancillary relief:
82,100

Divorce with ancillary relief: 35,800

Family 3 – The number of weeks it takes to achieve a final outcome for the child in care and supervision cases

Corporate and other Financial Indicators

The number of complaints recorded by HM Courts & Tribunals Service

- The percentage of complaints concluded by the first tier in HM Courts & Tribunals Service
- The average number of days it takes to finalise the answering of complaints
- Court level allocation and spend
- All spending and contracts over £25,000

⁷ Previously, activity was forecast by a variety of different measures: Number of children involved in applications (Care & Supervision, Contact & Residence), Number of cases (divorce), and number of applications (Ancillary Relief, Domestic Violence); the new figures show the number of cases starting, by type of case, and cover all family caseload.

section 2

Business Priorities

The priority for HM Courts & Tribunal service in 2012 – 2013 will be to continue to deliver business as usual against a backdrop of reduced resources. We will do this by delivering against our five business priorities as follows:

1. Implement the HM Courts & Tribunals Service future operating strategy by:

- Continuing to drive forward the new organisational structure for the delivery of our business.
- Building on the work to develop the long-term, strategic vision for the organisation and ensuring that it is embedded throughout the organisation.
- Publishing a document which sets out how HM Courts & Tribunals Service' intends to achieve its future vision.
- Continuing our commitment to Lean working within HM Courts & Tribunals Service.
- Developing our learning capabilities and equipping staff with the skills and tools they need to deliver the vision.

How we will deliver:

The new organisational structure

- Following completion of the new HM Courts & Tribunals Service headquarters structure the organisation has continued to implement the wider business design with completion of the new regional support and business unit structure expected by June 2012.

- Considerable work has already been undertaken to put in place a new structure for the management of the courts and tribunals. These have been grouped into new organisational units called 'Clusters', and 'Cluster Managers' were appointed in 2011 to effectively share resources and best practice across different jurisdictions.

Developing the long-term, strategic vision

- Work has begun to produce a long-term, customer-focused strategic vision to modernise the courts and tribunals, as an integral part of Transforming Justice.
- As part of this work, during the forthcoming year consideration will be given to further opportunities for rationalisation of those parts of the hearing estate not included in the original Court Estate Rationalisation Programme.

Publishing our future vision

- During 2012 the strategic vision will be set out in a public facing document which will explain how HM Courts & Tribunals Service will remodel its core business to deliver improved results for our customers over the longer term.

Continuing our commitment to Lean working within HM Courts & Tribunals Service

- By December 2012, we aim to have implemented standard operating procedures for all core work within the civil and family courts and tribunals. At the same time we

will continue the launch of Lean beacon sites across all of our core jurisdictions, to showcase service transformation and continuous improvement based on Lean principles.

- Within the criminal courts we will be continuing to develop and deliver standard operating procedures (SOPs) throughout 2012-2013. This will include specific SOPs to support the efficiencies being delivered through our digital working and streamlined case administration activity. During this period we will also continue to improve a number of existing SOPs which are already in use across the business.
- During 2012-2013 training will be delivered to equip leaders and staff with the continuous improvement skills they require in order to support them to deliver services to customers in a more effective and efficient way.

Developing learning capabilities and equipping staff with skills and tools

- We will launch a capability framework outlining leadership skills and behaviours for our leaders of the future. This will be supported by Civil Service Learning, the delivery tool for learning and development needs throughout the Civil Service.
- During 2012-2013 we will embed operational delivery as a profession within the business.
- We will build on our commitment to staff and managers in the new HQ and regional structures by ensuring that they are equipped to fulfil their roles and have the required skills to undertake their roles efficiently and effectively.
- By March 2013 we will convert all appropriate business skills material to computer based training modules in line with Civil Service Learning and Civil Service HR principles.
- We have exceeded targets for the enrolment of staff on apprenticeship and National Vocational Qualification programmes. During the coming year we will continue to build on this success, having secured funding until July 2012.

- We will continue to embed the Workforce Change process which decides the structure and staffing numbers in regions, assesses which roles are critical, and determines how the skills, knowledge and experience requirements of each role will be supplied. To support this process we will focus on ensuring a better understanding of business critical roles and planning, to ensure that we have the right person, with the right skills, in the right place.

2. Develop a sustainable business model for civil, family and administrative justice which balances spending and income by:

- Supporting the development and implementation of Transforming Justice and the related policy changes, for example, those resulting from the Family Justice Review and from the MoJ's response to "Solving disputes in the county courts: creating a simpler, quicker and more proportionate system".
- Unifying and transferring in a number of tribunals into our existing tribunals structure.
- Taking forward the outcomes from the public consultation to introduce a fee charging policy in Employment and Employment Appeal Tribunals.
- We will continue to pilot and evaluate the use of magistrates' courts legal advisors in tribunals' jurisdictions.

How we will deliver:

Development and implementation of civil, family and administrative justice policy changes

- Following the Government's response to the Family Justice Review we will work with MoJ's Justice Policy Group, delivery partners and the Judiciary to implement reform to family

court services in line with the accepted recommendations of the review

- Following the Government's response to the Solving Disputes in the County Court consultation we will introduce arrangements to increase the use of mediation for small claims.

Unifying and transferring tribunals

- The transfer in and unification of a number of tribunals into the unified tribunal structure and implementation of changes enabled by the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 will continue.
- This will include the First tier Property Chamber established in 2012/13.
- In addition, taking forward the proposals for the transfer of the Valuations Tribunal service for England to HM Courts & Tribunals Service.

Employment Tribunal Fees

- The consultation paper *Introducing fees in employment tribunals and the Employment Appeal Tribunal* was published by the MoJ on 14 December 2011 and closed on 6 March 2012.
- The responses to the paper will be considered and, if appropriate, and following Ministerial decision we will seek to introduce a business operating model for fee charging by summer 2013 to support the MoJ's policy in this area.
- The Employment Tribunal and Employment Appeal Tribunal fees scheme, if approved, will be supported by an accompanying ICT design which utilises, where appropriate, existing web components thereby ensuring value for money from any required ICT investment.

3. Increase efficiency and reduce cost across the Criminal Justice System by driving and implementing process change, matching resources to demand, reducing duplication and waste by:

- Improving courtroom efficiency within the Crown Court and magistrates' courts through our support of the early guilty pleas scheme being led by the Senior Presiding Judge, the abolition of committal hearings, the provision of increased strategic direction and a range of options to introduce further justice reform.
- Increasing provision of video services and digital working with the judiciary and the various criminal justice agencies to ensure that the Criminal Justice System is more efficient and speedy.

How we will deliver:

Improving courtroom efficiency: Supporting early guilty plea scheme in the Crown Court

- The Senior Presiding Judge's scheme to encourage guilty pleas at the earliest point in a case will deliver improved case management in the Crown Court. It will be rolled out to a further 20 courts by June 2012 and we plan to support the commencement of the full national rollout to the rest of England and Wales by December 2012.

Abolition of committal hearings from magistrates' courts

- By March 2013 we will implement legislative provisions to remove committal hearings from all magistrates' courts, working with the Crown Prosecution Service and other agencies to reduce pressure on our services and maximising courtroom efficiency.

Modernisation of the summons process in the magistrates' courts and improvement of the fixed penalty process

- Following the completion of the evaluation of the new postal requisitioning process at early adopter courts, we will be delivering this process nationally to the Crown Prosecution Service and Serious Fraud Office by the end of April 2012, and reviewing the potential to extend it to the remaining prosecuting bodies by September 2012.
- We are working in partnership with the National Policing Improvements Agency (and in due course its successor body) on the processing of fixed penalty notices with the aim of constructing a new process by March 2013.

Increasing provision of video services and digital working with the judiciary and other criminal justice agencies

- By summer 2012 we will increase court efficiency by introducing digital working with other CJS partners by delivering a cross Criminal Justice System Document Repository Service for the storing and transferring of documents digitally between agencies.
- To support extended digital working we will undertake work to ensure that the existing wide area network, in-court video systems and electronic presentation of evidence infrastructure can meet the increased demand.
- Subject to ministerial approval we will complete the delivery of enhanced video services in the criminal courts including a further 44 prison and court video links in those remaining Crown Courts where they are not currently installed.
- From April 2012 we will increase the number of courts that allow police officers to give evidence via video link (Liveline) and the number of courts that can deal with first hearings by video link (Virtual Court).

Supporting an independent judiciary

- We will work with the judiciary to develop proposals for how best to deploy District Judges (Magistrates' Courts) and magistrates by May 2012, and look to implement the agreed framework by March 2013.
- In partnership with the judiciary we will review judicial governance arrangements, specifically relating to the various local representative groups in the Magistrates' Courts, to produce initial recommendations by May 2012 and complete implementation of these recommendations by July 2013.
- Following consultation we will deliver a new model for Justices' Clerks and their Deputies' across England & Wales by March 2013.

Promote further criminal justice system reform

- We will examine a range of options to introduce further reform and efficiency by:
 - testing alternatives for flexible court sittings in the magistrates' courts between April 2012 and November 2012.
 - examining the increased involvement of the local community in neighbourhood justice initiatives through the evaluation of neighbourhood justice panels, commencing in April 2012.
 - testing a range of measures to increase efficiency in the magistrates' courts including: proportionate handling of uncontested, high volume and low level offences, simplifying summary trials, streamlining forensic reporting and fast-tracking cases.

4. Centralising and standardising business processes in national back offices and contact centres by:

- Achieving economies of scale by centralising and standardising administrative business processes in national back offices.
- Building our contact centre network to provide customers with a single point of contact for queries relating to centralised processes.
- Assessing to what extent this operating approach could be extended to other areas of administrative process to improve efficiencies.

How we will deliver:

Expanding our programme of work to centralisation of business processes

- Following the establishment the County Court Claim Service in Salford we will establish a programme in 2012 to continue the centralisation of business processes.
- Expanding business centre capacity at existing back offices in Leicester, Salford and Northampton to support the increased centralisation of business processes.

Provide a single point of contact for customers

- Following the establishment of contact centre capability at Loughborough to support the the County Court Claim Service and Social Security and Child Support appeals; we will look to build further capacity to support the increased number of processes to be handled in national back offices.

Further expansion of the business centre and contact centre approach

- Assess to what extent this approach would be applicable to administrative processes elsewhere in HM Courts & Tribunals Service.
- Begin work to examine whether a business

centre and contact centre approach would improve efficiencies for administrative processes in the Magistrates’ Courts.

- We will review and improve the services we provide from the business and contact centres, in line with our policy of continuous improvement.

5. Delivering a cheaper, faster and more proportionate enforcement system that achieves a significantly higher degree of compliance with court orders by:

- Evaluating and deliver alternative models for the future delivery of criminal fines, compliance and enforcement services.
- Working in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to increase and administer the amount which can be automatically deducted from benefits.
- Evaluating the success of a pilot to recover financial penalties which have outstanding balances and are classified as ‘aged debt’.
- Creating a single national enforcement structure with line management responsibility for all criminal enforcement staff.
- Creating a national set of standard working practices for all enforcement functions.
- Consulting on how to increase the use of asset seizure within the criminal justice system.
- Considering extending the expedited use of distress warrants to seize assets.
- Developing options to provide more protection for people against aggressive bailiffs.

How we will deliver:

Evaluate and deliver alternative models for the future delivery of criminal fines, compliance and enforcement services

- During 2012-2013 we will evaluate a range of alternative models for the future

collection of criminal fines, compliance and enforcement services and, following endorsement by the HM Courts & Tribunals Service Board and approval by Ministers, we will implement delivery of the agreed commercial model.

Increase the maximum benefit deduction rate administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

- We will work in partnership with the DWP during 2012 to introduce an increase in the maximum amount which can be directly deducted from an individual's benefits to pay an outstanding financial imposition, from the current rate of £5 to a rate of £25 per week, following the proposed introduction of universal tax credit legislation in 2013-14.

Aged debt pilot evaluation

- By April 2012 we will evaluate a pilot with three commercial companies to improve collection of our 'aged debt' - criminal financial penalties over 12 months old with an outstanding balance. The evaluation will test the outcomes of the pilot; to understand better our ability to collect our aged debt and to understand the best combination of techniques and innovation with which to increase collection. The results of the pilot will help inform our future strategy for dealing with outstanding aged debt.

Create a single national enforcement structure with a standard set of working practices for all enforcement functions

- By March 2013 we want to have created a national standard way of working for all enforcement functions so accounts are managed in the same way across each enforcement team.

Consultation exercise on increasing the use of asset seizure within the criminal justice system

- As part of the wider community sentences consultation we will, by May 2012, consult on proposals to increase the use of civil charging orders to secure confiscation orders thereby forcing orders of sale to seize assets and increase the recovery of debt.

Consider proposals to extend the expedited use of distress warrants to seize assets

- Following the completion of a successful pilot in the south west region we will consider proposals to extend further by June 2012 the expedited use of distress warrants to seize assets.

