



National Audit Office

An Overview of the  
**Ministry of Justice**  
for the new Parliament 2023-24

December 2024

OVERVIEW

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Ministry of  
**JUSTICE**

# 1 Introduction to the National Audit Office

**W**elcome to our Overview of the Ministry of Justice, part of our series of Overviews for the new Parliament, covering government departments and cross-cutting issues.

The National Audit Office (NAO) is the UK's independent public spending watchdog and is responsible for scrutinising public spending for Parliament. We audit the financial accounts of all departments, executive agencies, arm's-length bodies, some companies and charities, and other public bodies. We also examine and report on the value for money of how public money has been spent.

The NAO is independent of government and the civil service. The NAO's wide remit and unique access rights enables us to investigate whether taxpayers' money is being spent in line with Parliament's intention and to respond to concerns where value for money may be at risk.

We support all Members of Parliament to hold government to account and we use our insights to help those who manage and govern public bodies to improve public services. In 2023, the NAO's work led to a positive financial impact through reduced costs, improved service delivery, or other benefits to citizens, of £1.59 billion.

We are funded by, and accountable to, Parliament. As an Officer of the House of Commons, I am committed to ensuring that we support you and your staff in your work as a Member of Parliament, and your scrutiny of public spending and performance.

Our dedicated Parliamentary team can offer you support and put you in touch with our experts on subjects of interest to you and your constituents. If you would like more information about our work, or to arrange a briefing with me or one of my teams, please contact our Parliamentary Relations team at [parliament@nao.org.uk](mailto:parliament@nao.org.uk).



## Gareth Davies

COMPTROLLER & AUDITOR GENERAL  
NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE

Gareth Davies was appointed Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) in June 2019. He was appointed by the Monarch, following the approval of the House of Commons.

The C&AG has statutory authority to examine and to report directly to Parliament on whether government departments and other public sector bodies have spent taxpayers' money in the way Parliament intended. The C&AG and his staff are totally independent of government.

Gareth is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. He is a non-executive Board member of the INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI), which supports Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in developing countries to sustainably enhance their performance and capacity.

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# 2 How the NAO can help you as a Member of Parliament

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## How we support Parliament

We produce reports:

- on the annual accounts of government departments and their agencies;
- on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which government has spent public money; and
- to establish the facts where there are concerns about public spending issues.

We do not question government policy objectives. We look at how government has spent money delivering those policies and if that money has been used in the best way to achieve the intended outcome.

## What we can offer

Through our website or our Parliamentary Relations team, MPs, peers and staff can:

- request a personal briefing on areas of our work that are of interest to them;
- sign up to receive embargoed copies of our reports on subjects of interest;
- make general queries about public spending, or raise concerns with us about value for money; and
- request advice on understanding and scrutinising departments' annual reports and accounts.

## Resources available on our website

- **Reports:** Reviews of public spending and how well government is delivering.
- **Insights:** Learning and best practice to help people across government and the wider public sector.
- **Overviews:** Factual overviews of government departments, sectors and services.
- **Work in progress:** Our schedule of future publications.
- **Briefings:** Background information and factual analysis to support Select Committees.

## Keep up to date with our work

- Sign up to our [latest report updates](#)
- Follow us on [X](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

## How to get in touch

- Via our Parliamentary email inbox: [parliament@nao.org.uk](mailto:parliament@nao.org.uk).



Auditing the accounts of all government departments and public organisations, helping assure money is being spent the way Parliament intended



Reporting to Parliament on the value for money of how public money has been spent and what has been achieved



Sending you embargoed copies of our reports before they are available to the public



Providing briefings to you or a member of your team on our work



Providing advice and training on examining government departments' annual reports and accounts



Giving evidence to Select Committees



Our fortnightly newsletter with our latest reports and new work



You can write to us with any queries or concerns about the misuse of public money or behaviour in public bodies we audit

# 3 About this Overview

This report has been produced to provide an introduction to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the NAO's examination of its spending and performance. **It is intended to support the Justice Select Committee and Members across the House in their examination of MoJ.**

**It summarises the key information and insights that can be gained** from our examinations of MoJ and related bodies in the justice sector in England and Wales and MoJ's annual report and accounts. MoJ spent over **£15 billion in 2023-24** to oversee elements of the justice system. MoJ administers courts and tribunals in partnership with the independent judiciary, prisons, probation services and a range of services to help children, vulnerable people, victims of crime and those seeking access to justice.

The report includes:

- the role and remit of MoJ;
- how MoJ is structured;
- where MoJ spends its money and spending patterns;
- key developments within MoJ and justice sector over the past year:
  - courts and tribunals;
  - legal aid and court reform;
  - the prison population and capacity of the prison estate;
  - probation; and
  - reducing reoffending
- key challenges facing MoJ this Parliament; and
- where to find more information about our work on MoJ.

This report updates our previous report, [Ministry of Justice Departmental Overview 2022-23](#), published in February 2024.

## How we have prepared this report

The information in this report draws on the findings and recommendations from our financial audit and value-for-money work, and from publicly available sources, including the annual report and accounts of the department and its bodies.

We have cited these sources throughout the guide to enable readers to seek further information if required. Where analysis has been taken directly from our value-for-money or other reports, details of our

audit approach can be found in the Appendix of each report, including any evaluative criteria and the evidence base used.

Other analysis in the guide has been directly drawn from publicly available data and includes the relevant source as well as any appropriate notes to help the reader understand our analysis.

## Other relevant publications

More information about our work on MoJ, as well as information about our other recent and upcoming reports, can be found on the [NAO website](#).



# 4 The Ministry of Justice

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## MoJ is the lead government department responsible for the justice system in England and Wales

MoJ is responsible for administering:

- courts and tribunals, in partnership with the independent judiciary;
- prisons;
- probation services; and
- other services to help children, vulnerable people, victims of crime and those seeking access to justice, including legal aid.

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice oversees all MoJ business and is supported by two ministers of state and three parliamentary under-secretaries.

### Progress against objectives

The table to the right shows a selection of MoJ's reported 2023-24 outcomes, which are based on the priority outcomes from its July 2021 [Outcome Delivery Plan](#).

Priority outcome	Summary of the Ministry of Justice's description of achievements in 2023-24
<b>1 To protect the public from serious offenders and improve the safety and security of prisons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delivered around 6,000 additional prison places since 2020, by building new prisons and expanding and refurbishing the existing estate.</li><li>• Increased the use of electronic monitoring and delivered associated programmes and initiatives (page 20).</li><li>• Implemented seven of the 13 accepted recommendations in the <a href="#">Terrorism in Prisons</a> report.</li><li>• Implemented commitments in the <a href="#">Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan</a> to improve women's rehabilitative outcomes.</li></ul>
<b>2 To reduce reoffending</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased the percentage of prison leavers in employment six months after release (page 22).</li><li>• Expanded incentivised substance-free living units from 50 in 2022-23 to 80.</li><li>• Launched a new Prisoner Education Service in September 2023.</li><li>• Finalised preparations for the first secure school, which opened in August 2024.</li></ul>
<b>3 To deliver swift access to justice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased the number of Crown Court sitting days to more than 107,000 in 2023-24.</li><li>• Between October and December 2023, 662 adult rape cases progressed through the Criminal Justice System, against an ambition of 553.</li><li>• Completed the rollout of the new common platform case management system, used by all criminal courts in England and Wales since summer 2023 (page 15).</li></ul>

Source: National Audit Office analysis of the Ministry of Justice *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24*

# 5 How MoJ is structured

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## MoJ is supported by 35 public bodies covering criminal, civil and family justice systems in England and Wales

### MoJ bodies

**HM Courts & Tribunals Service** is responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales and non-devolved tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

**HM Prison and Probation Service** carries out sentences given by the courts, in custody and the community, and rehabilitates people in its care by addressing education, employment, accommodation and substance misuse needs in England and Wales.

**The Youth Justice Board** oversees the youth justice system in England and Wales.

**The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority** deals with compensation claims from people who have been injured because they were the victim of a violent crime in England, Scotland or Wales.

**The Legal Aid Agency** administers civil and criminal legal aid and advice in England and Wales.

**The Parole Board** is an independent body that carries out risk assessments on prisoners to determine whether they can be safely released into the community.

Some bodies operate entirely outside of the criminal areas of the justice system, including the following:

- **The Office of the Public Guardian** supervises the financial affairs of people who lack the mental capacity for making decisions.
- **The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service** is independent of the courts and represents children in family court cases in England.



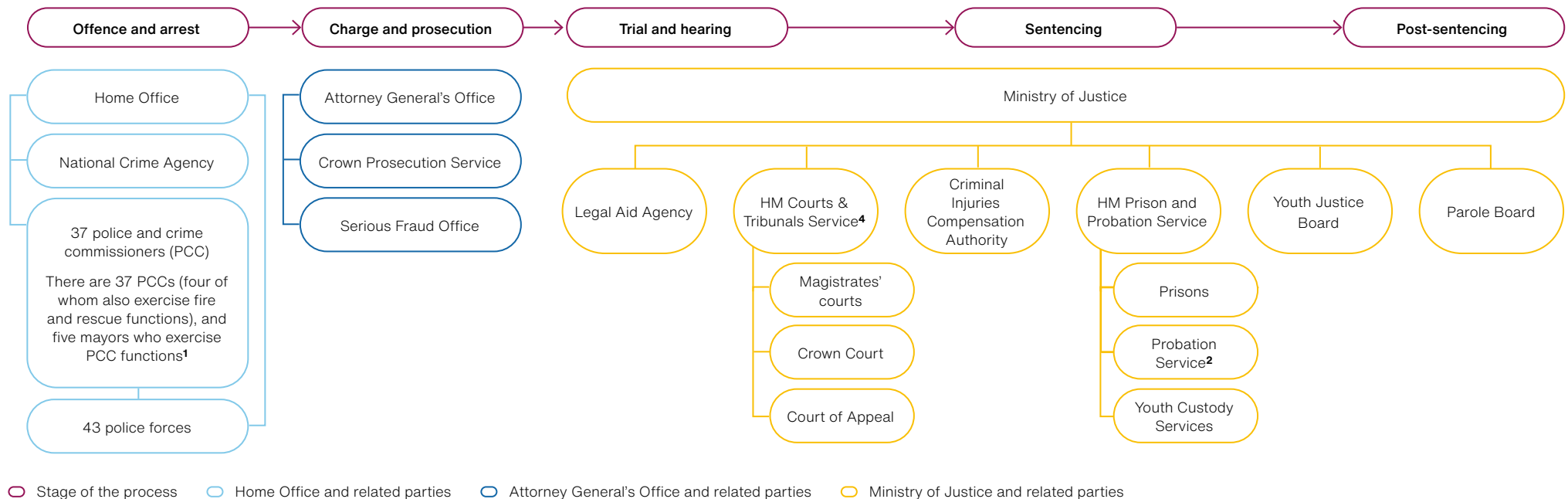
William  
stock.adobe.com

## Section 5:

### How MoJ is structured *continued*

#### Bodies involved in the criminal justice system

The Ministry of Justice works with other government bodies in the criminal justice system<sup>3</sup>



#### Notes

1 There are five police force areas where a directly elected mayor is accountable for exercising the Police and Crime Commissioner functions: the Metropolitan Police Service, Greater Manchester Police, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, and North Yorkshire.

2 Since December 2019 in Wales and June 2021 in England the Probation Service has been responsible for managing all offenders serving a community sentence or on licence following their release from prison in England and Wales.

3 The bodies included are not exhaustive.

4 The courts also hear cases sent directly by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, TV Licensing and other authorities.

Source: National Audit Office



# 6 Where MoJ spends its money

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## MoJ's total expenditure in 2023-24 was £14.6 billion<sup>1</sup>

It generated an income of £1.8 billion, reducing the overall cost to the taxpayer to £12.8 billion.

HM Prison and Probation Service accounts for the largest area of expenditure within the MoJ group (£6,559 million, 45% of expenditure).

The next largest areas of expenditure are by HM Courts & Tribunals Service, the Legal Aid Agency and by MoJ on policy, corporate services and associated offices costs, each with expenditure over £2 billion.

MoJ also receives income from a range of sources, including:

- court fees, payable by an applicant to the court;
- services provided by the Office of the Public Guardian, payable by customers (largely Power of Attorney fees);
- fines and penalties imposed by the judiciary or police, and is permitted to retain part of the amount collected; and
- a levy (fee) on the legal profession's approved regulators to fund the Legal Services Board and the Office for Legal Complaints.

The majority of this income is accounted for within the policy, corporate services and associated offices category.



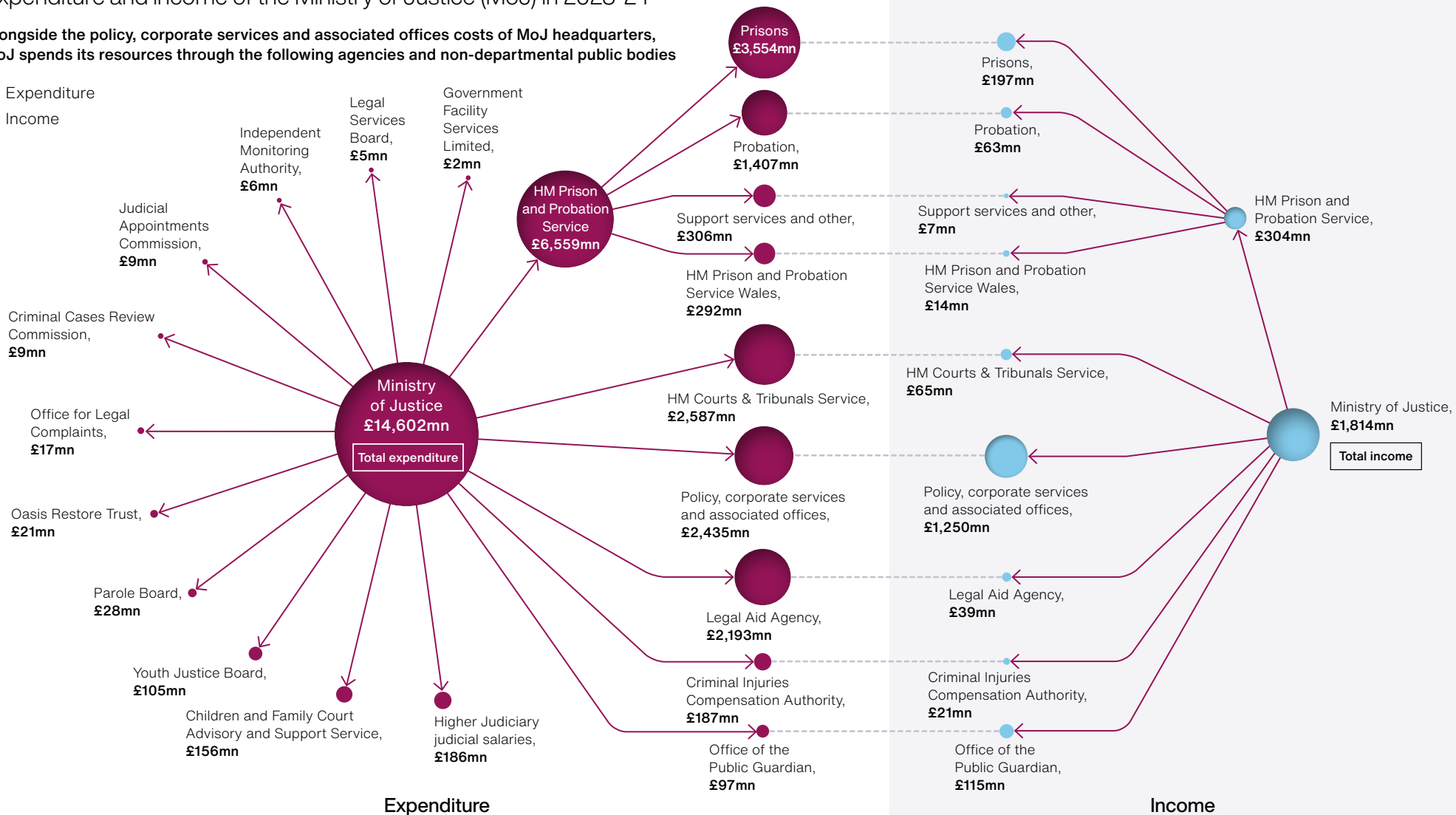
<sup>1</sup> Total Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) for the Ministry of Justice was £513 million and is not included in the figure. AME is more difficult to predict, manage or forecast, so is not subject to multi-year spending limits set in spending reviews. Changes in the value of provisions and pension liabilities are included in AME spending.

## Section 6: Where MoJ spends its money *continued*

### Expenditure and income of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in 2023-24

Alongside the policy, corporate services and associated offices costs of MoJ headquarters, MoJ spends its resources through the following agencies and non-departmental public bodies

- Expenditure
- Income



## Section 6:

### Where MoJ spends its money *continued*

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#### Expenditure and income of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in 2023-24 *continued*

##### Note

- 1 Figures rounded to the nearest million.
- 2 Figures have been drawn from the Statement of Outturn against Parliamentary Supply tables in the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ's) *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24* and the segmental analysis (Note 2a) in HM Prison and Probation Service's *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24*.
- 3 Bodies without an income value displayed either had no income or income not disclosed separately in the Statement of Outturn against Parliamentary Supply tables in MoJ's *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24*. The Statement of Outturn against Parliamentary Supply table shows where income is accounted for (for budgetary purposes), rather than where income is generated.
- 4 Figures include resource and capital spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL), which is the government budget that is allocated to and spent by government departments. Total Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) for the Ministry of Justice was £513 million and is not included in the figure. AME is more difficult to predict, manage or forecast, so is not subject to multi-year spending limits set in spending reviews.
- 5 Oasis Restore Trust is responsible for the operation and management of Oasis Restore, a secure academy for individuals in the youth custody estate.
- 6 The Office for Legal Complaints and the Legal Services Board are funded by levies (fees) on the legal profession's approved regulators. Levies are surrendered to the consolidated fund. Income surrendered to the consolidated fund is not shown.
- 7 The main expenditure sources are shown for HM Prison and Probation Service and so do not agree to total expenditure.
- 8 The individual accounts of each organisation will not reconcile to the figures shown here due to adjustments made in consolidating the MoJ group accounts.
- 9 Circles relating to expenditure below £10 million are not to scale.
- 10 Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Justice *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24* and HM Prison and Probation Service *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24*

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## Section 6:

### Where MoJ spends its money *continued*

## MoJ spends most of its budget on staff costs but has a sizeable capital budget for investments and infrastructure

### Financial management

MoJ's spending against its day-to-day spending budget (Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit, or RDEL) was £11,330 million in 2023-24. The largest area of resource expenditure related to people costs, accounting for £5,654 million (42%) of expenditure. Staff costs include wages and salaries, social security costs, pension costs, early departure costs and secondments.

MoJ increased its resource budget in-year from £10,879 million to £11,400 million (4.8% increase), reflecting increased budgetary pressures, including to its pay bill and also lower-than-expected income. It also made a claim for additional funding from the Reserve.<sup>2</sup>

For spending on assets and infrastructure such as buildings and equipment (Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit, or CDEL), MoJ spent £1,458 million, of which the

biggest share was MoJ's continued commitment to create 20,000 new prison places. MoJ's capital budget was initially £2,308 million for 2023-24, a 70% increase on capital spending in 2022-23. However, it reduced this budget during the year to £1,518 million (34% decrease), largely because it re-profiled prison expansion costs into future years due to delays.

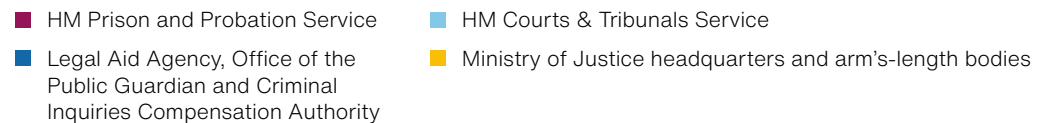
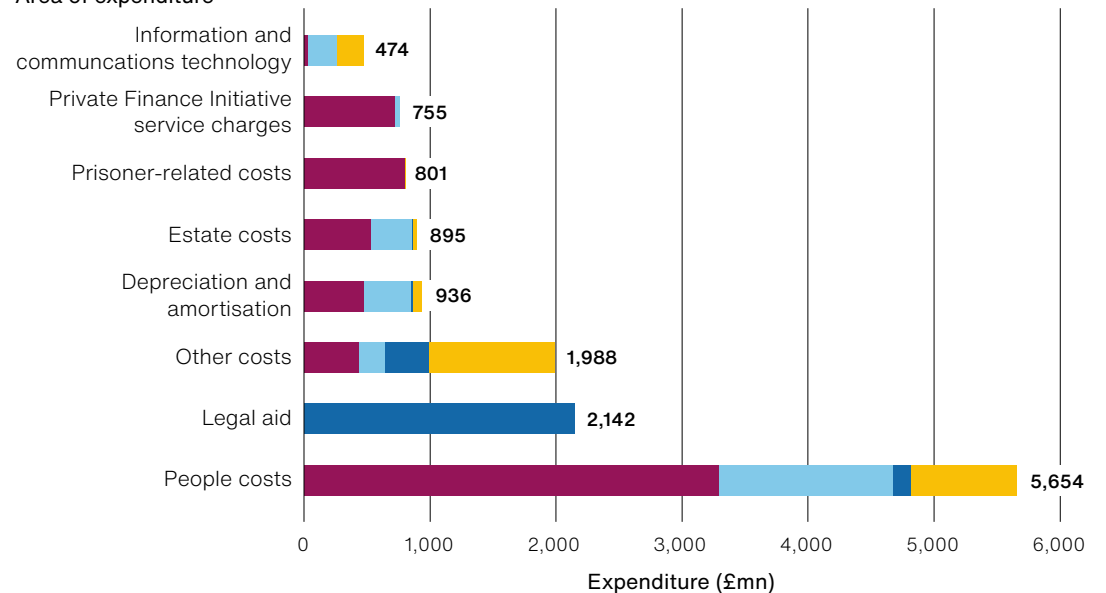
### Audit findings

The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) issued unqualified true and fair, and regularity audit opinions on the MoJ group accounts and on subsidiary accounts for 2023-24. Like for all major government departments, the C&AG issued an extended audit report, which identified key audit matters including property valuation, assets under construction, and other provisions. MoJ recognised six losses of more than £300,000, totalling £16.5 million (compared with seven losses worth £6.6 million in 2022-23).

## Ministry of Justice expenditure 2023-24, by category of spend

The largest area of resource expenditure related to people costs, accounting for £5,654 million (42%) of expenditure

### Area of expenditure



### Notes

- 1 Numbers are rounded to the nearest million.
- 2 Resource expenditure relates to day-to-day spending on an organisation's objectives or administration.
- 3 People costs include wages and salaries, social security costs, early departure costs and the net cost of secondments.
- 4 Other costs include impairments, contracted-out costs, travel and subsistence, training and other staff-related costs, grants, and other miscellaneous costs.

Source: Ministry of Justice, *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24*, HC 276, November 2024

<sup>2</sup> HM Treasury manages an additional pot of funding for unforeseen government spending called the Reserve.

# 7 Courts and tribunals trends

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## In 2023-24, courts and tribunals received over 4.1 million cases

### Tribunals

Tribunals deal with disputes in a number of diverse areas of the law including employment, tax, immigration and asylum, and health, education and social care (321,000 cases in 2023-24).

### Family court

Family courts deal with legal disputes connected with family matters, including children and the breakdown of relationships (553,000 cases in 2023-24).

### Civil court

Civil justice captures a wide range of issues, where people, businesses or other organisations are trying to resolve their disputes with each other, or ensure that they have their rights respected (1,700,000 cases in 2023-24).

### Criminal court

Criminal cases come to court after a decision has been made, usually by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, to prosecute someone for an alleged crime. Cases are initially held in the magistrates' court, with more serious cases progressing to the Crown Court (1,525,000 cases in 2023-24).

### Family court trends

MoJ publishes statistics for different types of family court cases.<sup>3</sup> Of the 64,342 new cases starting between January 2024 and March 2024 (excluding Adoption Act cases),<sup>4</sup> most related to divorce or annulment of a marriage or civil partnership (27,988, 43%) and care proceedings for children (17,584, 27%). Between January 2024 and March 2024, 57,587 cases reached a final disposal (excluding Adoption Act cases).<sup>5</sup>

MoJ does not report on the total outstanding caseload of family courts.

MoJ is rolling out a new case-management system in family courts, which has affected published statistics, with some back series being revised. Reporting in summer 2024 on timeliness showed for private law cases the average time to first disposal was 30 weeks in January 2024 to March 2024, two weeks less than the same period in 2023. For public law cases, the average time to first disposal was 38 weeks in January 2024 to March 2024, three weeks less than the same period in 2023.<sup>5</sup>

We are due to publish a report on [improving family court services for children](#) in Spring 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Children Act – Public Law; Children Act – Private Law; Matrimonial matters; Financial remedies; Domestic violence remedy orders; Forced Marriage protection; Female Genital mutilation; and All Adoption Acts. In addition, MoJ also reports on statistics related to the Mental Capacity Act and Probate. Further information on what these include can be found [here](#) (accessed 25 November 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Data not available. Data quality issues are explained [here](#) (accessed 25 November 2024).

### Civil court trends

MoJ publishes statistics on three types of civil justice:

- county and magistrates' court civil (non-family) cases (approximately 350,000 new cases per quarter);
- judicial review cases (approximately 700 new cases per quarter); and
- privacy injunction proceedings (approximately 10 proceedings per year).<sup>6</sup>

There were 415,749 new claims at county courts between January and March 2024, a 6.4% decrease compared with the 443,975 cases in the same quarter in 2023 (excluding insolvency cases). The majority of claims related to money claims (343,033 or 83%). MoJ does not report on the number of outstanding civil cases at county courts.

For January to March 2024, the average length from issuing the claim to trial was 52 weeks for small claims (no change compared with the same period in 2023) and 83 weeks for fast and multi-track trials (increase of three weeks compared with the same period in 2023).

<sup>5</sup> A disposal is a sentence or outcome of a case. Crown Courts also record cases that are transferred to other courts as disposals.

<sup>6</sup> Civil court statistics include those for money claims, personal inquiry claims, and 'other – damages claims', mortgages and landlord possession claims, claims for return of goods, other non-money claims and insolvency petitions. Further information on what these include can be found [here](#) (accessed 24 November 2024).

## Section 7:

### Courts and tribunal trends *continued*

## The backlog remains high, but data quality issues mean MoJ has not been able to publish data on the size of the backlog

### ■ Types of criminal courts

#### Magistrates' court

The magistrates' court is the first tier of criminal courts in England and Wales. A criminal case can start and finish in a magistrates' court or start in a magistrates' court and finish in a higher court, normally the Crown Court.

There were approximately 353,000 new criminal cases between October and December 2023.<sup>7</sup>

#### Crown Court

The Crown Court predominantly deals with serious criminal cases. Unlike the magistrates' court, trials in the Crown Court have a jury to determine the guilt of defendants and a judge who can impose tougher sentences. While all cases will initially start at the magistrates' court, cases that relate to serious offences such as murder or rape will be immediately sent to the Crown Court for a trial.

There were approximately 27,000 new Crown Court cases between October and December 2023.<sup>8</sup>

### ■ Backlog of cases

#### Magistrates' court

Between October and December 2023 there were fewer disposals of criminal cases than new cases, meaning the backlog at magistrates' courts continued to increase.

Previously, the backlog peaked in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and had been largely reducing until mid-2022, when it began to increase again.

#### Crown Court

In 2021 [we reported](#) that there was a backlog of cases in the Crown Court of 60,692 as at 30 June 2021. In October 2021, MoJ set a public ambition to reduce the Crown Court outstanding caseload to 53,000 by March 2025.

However, the backlog of cases at the Crown Court continued to rise due to factors including the pandemic and the criminal defence barristers' industrial action in 2022. Over the first three quarters of 2023, Crown Court disposal volumes increased but remained below the number of new cases, meaning the backlog continued to increase.

#### Data quality issues

At the time of drafting this Overview, the exact size of the current backlog was not published. MoJ had postponed publication of its latest statistical releases for further

quality assurance following concerns about the quality of some of the data. It had identified some necessary changes to court processing systems to enable robust and accurate data to be produced, which it reports did not affect operation of the courts. MoJ was undertaking work to publish revised data in December 2024, including any revisions to the published back series.

### ■ Reducing the backlog in the Crown Court

In May 2024 we published an investigation into [Reducing the backlog in the Crown Court](#). We concluded the following:

- The rise in the Crown Court backlog can only have exacerbated the negative effects that waiting longer can have on victims, witnesses and defendants, and can also add to the cost of administering justice.
- More accurate projections by MoJ of the flow of cases in the Crown Court would better support it to manage the backlog.
- MoJ must work closely with other parts of the justice system to gather intelligence to understand how changes in policy and activity in one part of the system can affect other parts and take coordinated and timely action in response.

We also reported that the Crown Court backlog is contributing to acute prison population pressures.

<sup>7</sup> Most recent data available. The Ministry of Justice had postponed new releases of criminal court statistics due to data quality issues.

<sup>8</sup> See footnote 7.

# 8 Legal aid and court reform

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## MoJ is seeking to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the courts

### Legal aid funding

Legal aid is publicly funded legal advice or representation in court and tribunals for people who meet the government's eligibility criteria.

We published a report on legal aid in February 2024, [Government's management of legal aid](#). We found that MoJ accomplished its objective of significantly reducing legal aid spending. In real terms, spending on legal aid fell by £728 million, from £2,584 million to £1,856 million between 2012-13 and 2022-23 (in 2022-23 prices), as case volumes fell.

MoJ introduced reforms in 2013 to discourage unnecessary litigation and make significant savings. But more than a decade on, MoJ still lacks an understanding of the full costs and benefits of its reforms.

Our findings concluded that MoJ does not know whether everyone eligible for legal aid can access it and that the government needs to do more to ensure the sustainability of the legal aid market if it is to achieve value for money.

We recommended that MoJ needs to do more to ensure legal aid is available to all those who are eligible. Until it does, it cannot demonstrate that it is meeting its core objectives and securing value for money.

MoJ's Review of Civil Legal Aid was due to be published in 2024.

### The court reform programme

HM Courts & Tribunals Service's (HMCTS's) reform programme, established in 2016, aimed to modernise the justice system, moving away from paper-based systems to user-friendly digital services, increasing efficiency and improving access to justice.

Our February 2023 report [Progress on the courts and tribunal reform programme](#) assessed HMCTS's progress in implementing the programme prior to its planned completion in December 2023. It found the following:

- HMCTS had continued to roll out changes to services within an increasingly difficult operational environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic. It had made more services available online and begun introducing new digital systems, including a digital case management system (called 'common platform') to criminal courts.
- Following repeated delays, HMCTS's priority had been on delivering its reforms at pace rather than embedding sustainable change. Some services were not working as efficiently as expected and HMCTS had a limited understanding of whether reformed services were delivering the intended efficiencies. Of most concern was the implementation of common platform, which was having a detrimental impact on courts.

Since we last reported, HMCTS has reset the programme twice following increased delivery risk. Most recently, in February 2024, HMCTS announced that it now plans to complete all projects by March 2025, over a year later than planned. It will deliver less than previously planned, with work on some services stopped and the scope of its common platform project reduced. Expected savings will be at least £310 million lower than the £2.3 billion forecast in 2019.



# 9 The prison population

## MoJ expects the prison population to increase significantly by the end of 2027, but prisons are very close to being full

### The current prison population and future projections

On 28 October 2024, the total prison population in England and Wales was approximately 85,900. The prison estate had a useable operational capacity of 89,008 spaces and was therefore 96% full.

Of those in prison at the end of March 2024:<sup>9</sup>

- 96% were male and 4% were female;
- 96% were over 21 years old and 4% were younger;
- 16,458 were held on remand (13% increase from the previous year, linked to continued court backlogs); and
- 12,344 had been recalled to prison for breaching their release conditions (8% increase from the previous year).

In February 2024, MoJ projected the prison population may increase to 105,400 prisoners by the end of 2027 (its central estimate).<sup>10</sup> This is because of the continued

growth in police charging, prosecutorial activity, Crown Court backlogs and changes in sentencing policy designed to keep the most serious offenders in prison for longer.

### Prison conditions

There has been a steady rise in prison crowding since March 2021. In the 12 months to March 2024, MoJ reported that 20,533 prisoners (24% of the average prison population for the year) were being held in crowded conditions, up from 23% in the previous year.

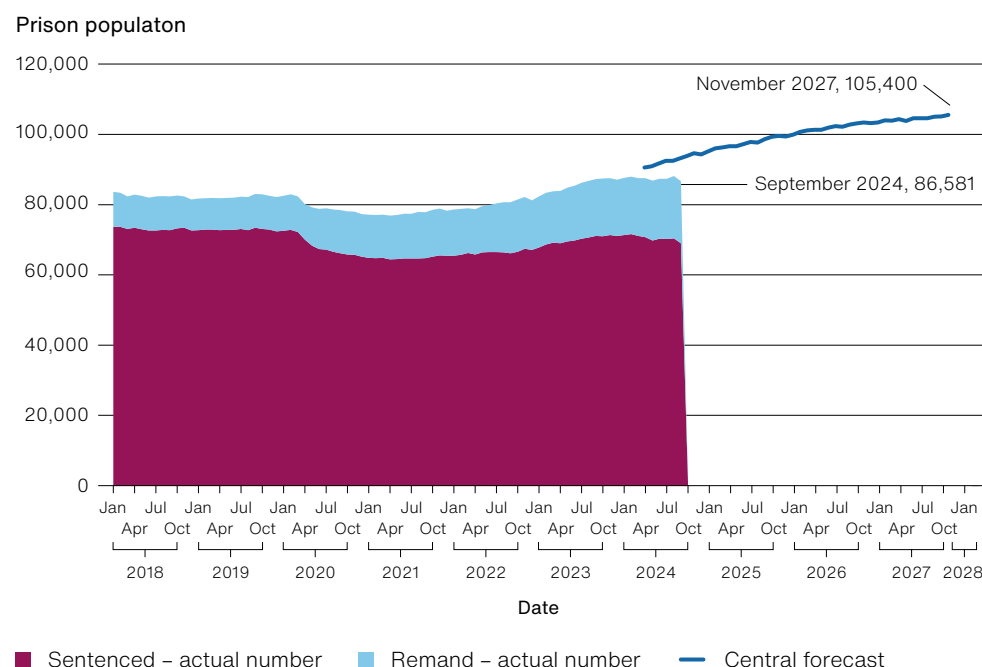
### Safety in custody

In the 12 months to March 2024, there were:

- 291 deaths in custody (down 10% compared with 2022-23);
- 73,804 self-harm incidents (up 24% compared with 2022-23);
- 18,788 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (up 24% compared with 2022-23); and
- 9,847 assaults on staff (up 32% compared with 2022-23).

The actual and projected prison population, 2018 to end 2027

The prison population may increase to 105,400 by the end of 2027 (central estimate)



### Notes

- 1 Projection shown is based on the Ministry of Justice's central estimate in *Prison population projections 2023 to 2028 England and Wales*, 29 February 2024.
- 2 Actual sentenced and remand numbers are shown at the end of each month.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of prison population statistics and the Ministry of Justice's prison population projections

<sup>9</sup> Overall numbers for the total prison population are published weekly and monthly. More detailed statistics are published on a quarterly basis.

<sup>10</sup> *Prison population projections 2023 to 2028 England and Wales*, 29 February 2024.



# 10 Enlarging the prison estate to meet demand

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## MoJ's portfolio of prison capacity projects is behind schedule, but it has taken a range of short-term measures to cope with the increased prison population

### The 20,000 additional prison places portfolio

In October 2021, MoJ committed to deliver a portfolio of 20,000 additional prison places by the mid-2020s. Total approved estimated funding was £5.2 billion.

In our December 2024 report [Increasing the capacity of the prison estate to meet demand](#) we concluded the following:

- The current crisis in the prison estate is a consequence of previous governments' failure to align criminal justice policies with funding for the prison estate, leading to reactive solutions which represent poor value for money.
- HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has taken a reactive and expensive approach focused on building new places urgently at increased cost. Until there is greater coherence between the government's wider policy agenda and funding for its prison estate, the current crisis position will not represent value for money.
- HMPPS's expansion plan was unrealistic and was not prioritised by the government, with resulting delays that have exacerbated the current crisis.
- MoJ's central projection scenario shows demand for spaces exceeding capacity by 12,400 places by the end of 2027, even if current expansion projects are delivered to revised timelines. MoJ has committed to a more sustainable approach to ensuring a resilient prison estate although MoJ and HMPPS have yet to set out plans for closing the gap and considering the cost trade-offs involved.

### Short-term measures to relieve pressure

HMPPS has implemented a range of measures since late 2021 to ensure short-term capacity, largely comprising the following:

- Where it assesses this as safe: increasing crowding; reducing the number of cells taken out of use for maintenance; delaying moving some 18-year-olds from the youth estate; and temporarily recategorising some prisoners so they can be transferred to the open estate, freeing up over 2,000 additional places by the end of August 2024.
- Bringing forward existing capacity projects, including filling new prisons more quickly than normal.
- Renting overnight places in police cells.
- Restricting the flow of activity into courts.
- Reducing demand for places, such as two early release schemes. The End of Custody Supervised Licence scheme ran between 17 October 2023 and 9 September 2024. From 10 September 2024, HMPPS has run a scheme to release lower-risk prisoners with fixed term sentences after 40% of their sentence, rather than 50%. Approximately 16,400 people were released early under these schemes between October 2023 and October 2024.



## Section 10:

### Enlarging the prison estate to meet demand *continued*

#### The 20,000 additional prison places portfolio

The portfolio is made up of a mixture of new build prisons, additional houseblocks at existing sites, temporary accommodation and refurbishments

##### New build prison – 9,800 places

Modern prison designed to enhance rehabilitation, and staff and prisoner safety. Includes smaller houseblock communities, clear line-of-sight, and modern facilities.



New build prison wings, HMP Five Wells

##### Houseblock expansion – 3,000 places

Mixture of different houseblock designs which are built inside existing prisons. Provides additional modern houseblocks and facilities to existing sites.



Category D expansion houseblock, HMP Hatfield

##### Accelerated houseblock – 2,300 places

Standardised T block designs built inside existing prisons, similar to those installed at the new build prisons.



Accelerated houseblock construction, HMP Elmley

##### Rapid deployment cell – 1,700 places

Prefabricated, self-contained units with a shorter (around 15-year) lifespan, suitable for prisoners with a lower risk category (category D or risk-assessed category C). Can be double stacked where suitable.



Rapid deployment cells, HMP Northumberland

##### Small secure houseblock – 1,300 places

Standardised and repeatable design of 60-bed, single occupancy houseblocks built inside existing prisons. Self-contained design including facilities such as a pharmacy and kitchen.



Small secure houseblock concept design

##### Refurbishment – 1,700 places

Refurbishment of dilapidated wings and bringing cells back online which had been taken out of use. Main works include new furniture, window replacement, and remedial damp repair.



Refurbished prison wing following redecoration and lighting, electrical and flooring upgrades, HMP Liverpool

#### Notes

- 1 The figure does not include places generated by HMPPS from upgrading COVID-19 temporary accommodation, paying for increased crowding at private prisons, and converting other types of prison to adult male prisons. This totals around 1,200 places.
- 2 Category C prisons are where most prisoners are located. They provide prisoners with work and skills opportunities to better prepare them for release. Category D prisons allow prisoners to spend most of their day away from the prison on licence.
- 3 Figures are rounded to the nearest 100 places.

Source: National Audit Office summary of HM Prison and Probation Service prison expansion projects. HMP Liverpool image provided by and used with permission from Andy Aitchinson Photography. All other images provided by and used with the permission of HM Prison and Probation Service

# 11 Probation numbers and performance

## The number of people under probation supervision has remained stable in the last year

### Trends in probation

At the end of March 2024, the total number of people under the supervision of HMPPS was 238,993: 0.2% lower than on 31 March 2023 (239,518).

### Probation services

HMPPS is responsible for managing all those on a community sentence or licence following their release from prison.

HMPPS launched a new area model in October 2023, bringing together the probation regions and prison groups under seven geographical areas in England and Wales. HMPPS intends the new model to increase join-up between prisons and probation and devolve authority to speed up decision-making and support innovation. Across all regions there are 108 local probation delivery units (PDUs).

### Probation reset

In March 2024, the government announced a 'probation reset', which took effect from July 2024, to reduce demand in the probation service. Probation practitioners will no longer

actively supervise some categories of people who are on licence, community orders or suspended sentences in the last third of their probation period unless circumstances of the case change.

### HM Inspectorate of Probation reviews of performance

HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) aims to inspect every PDU in a three-year cycle. Of the PDU inspection reports published between 2021 and August 2023, none were rated as 'outstanding', one was rated as 'good' and 35 were rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'.

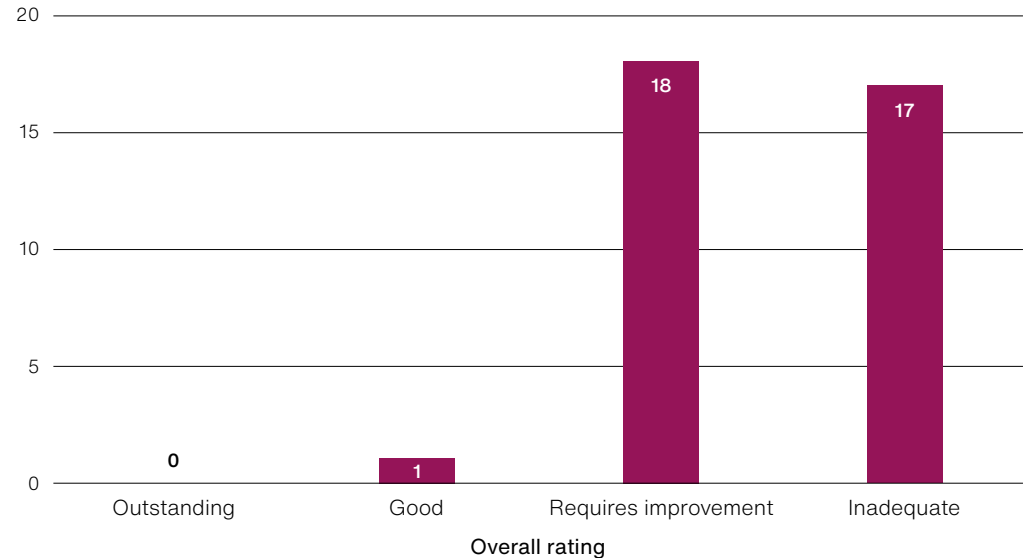
From August 2023, HMIP refreshed the probation service standards against which it inspects probation services.

Of the five inspections published up to the end of March 2024 against the new service standards, three received overall 'inadequate' ratings and two received 'requires improvement'. Findings in relation to keeping people safe continue to be a significant factor in the poor scores.

## HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection ratings of 36 local probation delivery units, between 2021 and August 2023

Thirty-five of the 36 probation delivery units inspected required improvement or were inadequate

Number of probation delivery units achieving this rating



### Notes

- Between 2021 and August 2023 HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspected 36 probation delivery units. After August 2023, the inspectorate moved to new standards. Those inspected after August 2023 used a different methodology to those inspected between 2021 and August 2023. The results of inspections after August 2023 are not shown.
- Further information on HMIP's inspection methodology and scoring (2021–2023) can be found in its annual reports: [HM Inspectorate of Probation annual reports](#). For HMIP's current standards and ratings, see: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-hmi-probation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of *HM Inspectorate of Probation Annual Report 2022-2023* and HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection reports 2023

## Section 11:

### Probation numbers and performance *continued*

#### The total number of individuals fitted with an electronic device has continued to rise since March 2023, particularly in the post-release and bail cohorts

#### Electronic monitoring

Electronic monitoring ('tagging') allows the police, courts, probation and immigration services to monitor offenders' locations and compliance with court orders, and act if offenders breach their requirements.

In August 2023, MoJ updated its [Electronic Monitoring in the Criminal Justice System](#) strategy. This placed an increased focus on improving data collection, monitoring the delivery of benefits and creating an evidence base for the impact of tagging on reoffending.

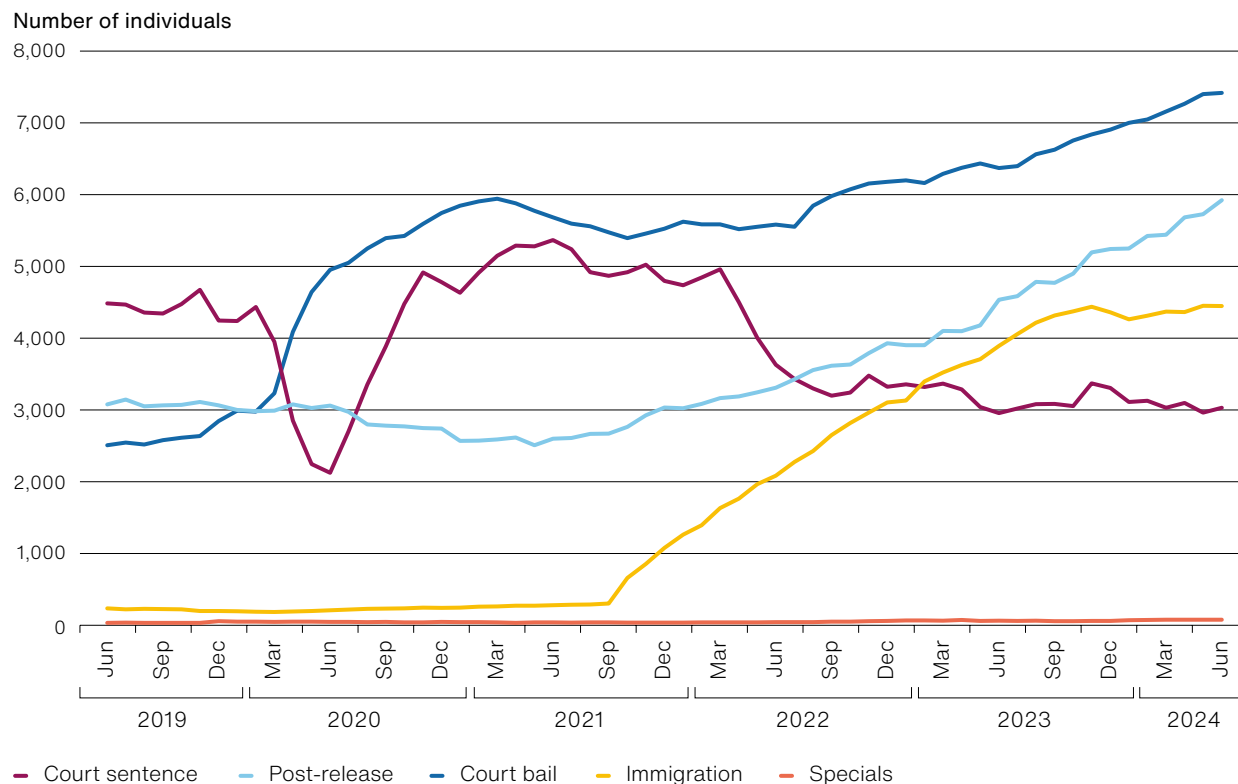
HMPPS re-procured its tagging contracts. In October 2023, Serco was awarded a contract worth around £330 million to provide an electronic monitoring service and, in May 2024, Serco took over the service. G4S was appointed the hardware provider, with a contract value of £175 million. The contracts will run to 2030, with an option to extend for up to two further years.

The total number of individuals fitted with an electronic monitoring device on 30 June 2024 was 20,893, an increase of 17% from 17,826 on 30 June 2023.

On 30 June 2024, 7,411 individuals had court bail as their primary order type, an increase of 16% from 30 June 2023. Post-release orders also increased by 30% (to 5,918 from 4,535) compared with 30 June 2023.

Snapshot of the number of electronic monitoring individuals by cohort, England and Wales, between June 2019 and June 2024

The number of individuals tagged on court bail, post-release supervision and pending immigration decision has increased in recent years, while the number of those tagged as a sentence of the court has fallen



#### Notes

- Number of offenders shown is as at the end of each month.
- 'Specials' refers to offenders assessed as high or very high risk of serious harm and managed under level-3 multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs).

Source: National Audit Office analysis of the Ministry of Justice's electronic monitoring statistics

# 12 Reducing reoffending

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## Reducing reoffending is one of MoJ's strategic priority outcomes. It focuses on interventions proven to reduce reoffending: a home, a job, and access to treatment for substance abuse

### The economic cost of reoffending

In 2018, MoJ estimated that reoffending within a 12-month follow-up period has an estimated economic and social cost of £18.1 billion a year (2017-18 prices).

### The rate of reoffending

The overall reoffending rate was 26.5% for the July to September 2022 offender cohort, an increase of 1.3 percentage points from the same quarter in 2021, reflecting the impact on court activity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the criminal defence barristers' industrial action.

Reoffenders committed, on average, 3.92 reoffences each. Over half of adults released from custodial sentences of less than 12 months reoffended (56.9%). The rate for those with longer sentences (12 months or more) was significantly lower at 19.4%.

Prison leavers are more likely to reoffend if they are not resettled into the community, for example, if they have nowhere to live, no job or other income, and have poor continuity of healthcare.

### Initiatives to reduce reoffending

The 2021 Spending Review announced £550 million over three years to reduce reoffending, and the 2021 [Prisons Strategy White Paper](#) set out further measures. MoJ and HMPPS initiatives include providing temporary accommodation for up to 84 nights where a prison leaver subject to probation supervision would be otherwise homeless, and supporting prisoners to increase the skills they need to find employment on release. The 2021 Spending Review also announced £120 million over three years to invest in tackling drug misuse among offenders in both custody and the community, as part of the government's drug strategy [From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives](#).

In September 2023, the government launched a new Prisoner Education Service, to improve prisoners' literacy, numeracy and employability skills.

### Improving resettlement to support prison leavers to reduce reoffending

In May 2023, we published a report, [Improving resettlement support for prison leavers to reduce reoffending](#), which looked at the government's effectiveness in resettling prison leavers. We found that the government is not consistently supporting prison leavers in resettling into the community and that the quality of services has declined in recent years.



## Section 12: Reducing reoffending *continued*

### Progress to date in improving resettlement support

#### Reported resettlement outcomes 2018-19 to 2023-24

There has been mixed progress against the resettlement performance indicators in 2023-24

Indicator	Financial year					
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
<b>Accommodation</b>						
Percentage of prison leavers housed on first night from custodial release	–	80.2	85.5	86.8	86.3	85.7
Percentage of prison leavers in settled accommodation three months post release from custody	–	–	74.4	75.3	75.6	73.5
<b>Drug and substance misuse</b>						
Percentage of prison leavers with a need for substance misuse treatment who engage successfully with community-based treatment within three weeks of release from custody	34.2	34.5	38.1	37.4	42.6	Note 3
<b>Employment</b>						
Percentage of prison leavers in employment six weeks post release	–	12.8	9.6	13.0	17.4	19.3
Percentage of prison leavers in employment six months post release	–	–	14.0	17.3	25.9	31.1

#### Notes

- 1 HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is seeking to increase the percentage of prisoner leavers who are housed on release, have a job and (where a need exists) engage with community-based drug and substance misuse treatment.
- 2 HMPPS reports that data provided are for the earliest years for which it has data of sufficient quality.
- 3 Data for drug and substance misuse outcomes for 2023-24 will be available from 2025.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of HM Prison and Probation Service *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24*



# 13 Demand and supply in the criminal justice system

**There is a continuing mismatch between demand and supply in the criminal justice system. Demand for services is primarily created by the police, who make arrests and some charging decisions or referrals to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for charging decisions. Supply of these services is primarily provided by HMCTS, which administers cases through the courts, and HMPPS, which manages those in custody and supervised in the community.**

## Demand in the criminal justice system

- Our March 2022 report [The Police Uplift Programme](#) found that the recruitment of 20,000 additional police officers could lead to an additional 729,000 cases entering the criminal justice system (CJS) over the next 10 years.
- In 2023-24, the CPS reported 214,899 referrals from the police (6% higher than in 2022-23).
- The government has committed to delivering 13,000 additional policing personnel in neighbourhood policing roles.

## Demand for prison places

- In February 2024, MoJ projected that the prison population may increase to 105,400 prisoners by the end of 2027 (its central estimate), partly due to additional activity by others in the CJS and to measures seeking to get tougher on crime, including:
  - increasing custody time for violent and sexual offenders;
  - the impacts of changes following the *End-to-End Rape Review Report on Findings and Action*; and
  - changes to the parole system.

- In July 2024, in response to prison capacity pressures, the government announced it would release some prisoners with fixed term sentences after they have completed 40% of their sentence, instead of 50% previously.
- The government has announced an independent sentencing review, which will report its findings to the Lord Chancellor by Spring 2025.

## Demand for probation services

- As the growing number of prisoners progress through their sentences, there will be higher demand for probation services. MoJ estimates that the Probation Service may need to supervise around 72,000 prison leavers by March 2028 (around one-fifth more than in December 2023).
- Demand for probation services may be increased by the early release prison schemes.

## Supply of services

### Courts

- There were more than 107,000 Crown Court sitting days in 2023-24, a 32% increase compared with 2019-20.
- Our May 2024 investigation [Reducing the backlog in the Crown Court](#) found that the backlog of cases at the Crown Court remained significant. We also reported that this was contributing to acute prison population pressures. It also found that the proportion of ineffective trials had increased from 16% in 2019 to 27% in 2023, due to witness and defendant unavailability, poor case preparation, over-listing of cases and unavailability of barristers.

- In our report [Government's management of legal aid](#) and our investigation [Reducing the backlog in the Crown Court](#), we found that the number of criminal law lawyers had declined significantly in recent years, and that the government had been slow to tackle concerns about the sustainability of the market for lawyers.

## Prison places

- Our report [Increasing the capacity of the prison estate to meet demand](#) found that MoJ and HMPPS had delivered 6,518 additional prison places between 2020 and September 2024, against a commitment to deliver 20,000 by the mid-2020s.
- In his [Annual Report 2023-24](#), HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales reported that “increases in prisoner numbers was affecting every part of the estate”.

## Probation staffing

- HMPPS reports that it has increased staffing levels following sustained recruitment effort. However, it still faced some staffing shortfalls in some locations.
- In July 2024, the government announced plans to recruit at least 1,000 additional trainee probation officers by March 2025.

# 14 Staffing

## MoJ has increased the size of its workforce, but some staff retention and sickness concerns remain

### Staff numbers

On 31 March 2024, the MoJ group had the largest headcount of any department in the civil service (approximately 18% of the total civil service).

On a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis, which takes into account part-time workers, the average number of staff within the group in 2023-24 was 97,316, an increase of 5% compared with 2022-23, following recruitment in prisons and probation to fill vacancies.

### Staff experience and retention

#### HMPPS staffing

MoJ recruited 5,264 new prison officers and 543 trainee probation officers in 2023-24.<sup>11</sup> Due to high numbers of new staff, the average length of service of HMPPS staff has decreased. Overall, on 31 March 2024, 35.4% of FTE staff had less than three years' service, a slight increase from 32.4% at 31 March 2023. HMPPS has taken steps to improve the retention of staff, including establishing a retention oversight process.

#### HMCTS staffing

HMCTS had the highest leavers rate in the MoJ group, 14.5%, in 2023-24, although this is a decrease compared with 2022-23, when the rate was 15.9%.<sup>12</sup>

#### Sickness

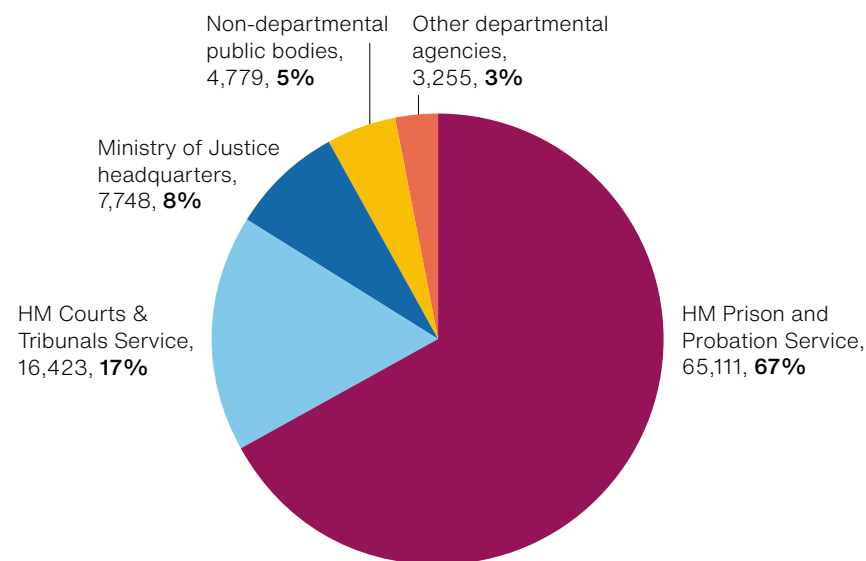
In the MoJ group, the average number of days lost due to sickness in the 12 months to 31 March 2024 was 10. This was a 1.2 day reduction compared with the end of March 2023.

11 On 31 March 2024, there were 20,225 band 3-4 prison officers and 5,139 probation officers in post.

12 The measure used is 'departmental turnover' which includes staff transferring to other roles within the civil service.

Average number of full-time equivalent staff employed by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) group in 2023-24

**HM Prison and Probation Service employed the largest number of staff (67% of 97,316 full-time equivalent) within the MoJ group**



#### Notes

- 1 Shows the average number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff employed over 2023-24.
- 2 Ministry of Justice headquarters includes staff engaged on capital projects (254 FTE).
- 3 Other departmental agency figures include staff from the Office of the Public Guardian, Legal Aid Agency and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.
- 4 'Non-departmental bodies' includes staff from Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), Criminal Cases Review Commission, and others.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Justice *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24*



# 15 Major projects and change

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## MoJ is delivering a significant portfolio of projects against a backdrop of rising costs and significant technical debt

### MoJ's major projects and programmes

The MoJ group had 21 projects and programmes on the Government's Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) in 2023-24, six fewer than in 2022-23.

In 2023-24 MoJ spent £1.6 billion on these projects and programmes, including on projects to:

- build additional infrastructure, primarily delivering additional prison places;
- transform services, including court reform;
- rehabilitate prisoners, such as Prison Education; and
- re-procure operational services, including IT services.

The most recently published GMPP data, at the end of March 2023, showed that, overall, the main risks to delivery of the 27 projects at that time included inflationary pressures to construction projects, recruitment and procurement difficulties, challenging timetables, and the complexity of some of the transformation projects and programmes. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority has not yet published GMPP data from April 2023 onwards.

### Related NAO insights on major programmes

- [Delivering value from government investment in major projects](#)
- [Managing uncertainty: Questions for decision-makers to ask in an uncertain environment](#)
- [Resetting major programmes](#)

### Digital strategy

MoJ published its [digital strategy for 2022 to 2025](#) in April 2022. The strategy has three themes: to become a more flexible organisation; to be driven by data; and to be led by users.

MoJ estimates it has significant technical debt. Technical debt is the estimated value of suboptimal digital systems which are creating inefficiencies or risks, such as security vulnerabilities and the inability to implement change quickly. If left unresolved, technical debt can cause business disruption and greater unforeseen issues in future digital projects. MoJ maintains a fund specifically for the reduction of technical debt.

MoJ's *Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24* does not disclose how much was spent on reducing technical debt. However, some of the £61 million capital spending on courts and tribunals IT assets was targeted at reducing technical debt from legacy systems.

MoJ acknowledges that its ability to reduce technical debt remains a challenge. It has created a dashboard for its most critical systems to reflect the risks, and plans to address them. But resources and capability continue to be an issue, both in maintaining old systems and developing new systems.



# 16 What to look out for

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## Illegal immigration

The King's Speech included a commitment to introduce a bill to Parliament to modernise the asylum and immigration system, establishing a new Border Security Command and delivering enhanced counter-terror powers to tackle organised immigration crime.

**Look out for:** How the new asylum and immigration bill is expected to impact on tribunals and the criminal justice system.

## Police recruitment

The government has committed to delivering 13,000 additional policing personnel in neighbourhood policing roles.

**Look out for:** Announcements on further police recruitment and any assessment of expected impact on the criminal justice system more widely.

## Tackling crime

The government has committed to being "mission driven", focusing on five key areas, one of which is "safer streets". This mission is to be led by the Home Office but will impact the wider criminal justice system. The King's Speech included a commitment to bring forward plans to halve violence against women and girls.

**Look out for:**

- How MoJ works with others towards the 'safer streets' mission.
- How new measures to tackle violence against women and girls will impact on the criminal justice system.

## Housing-related law changes

The government has introduced a bill in Parliament to strengthen the rights of those in the private rental sector, including abolishing no fault evictions and introducing a new ombudsman service. It also announced plans to introduce a bill to enact changes to leaseholder rights. These bills may lead to changes in the caseload in tribunals and civil courts.

**Look out for:** Progress of the bills, associated impact assessments and government plans to reflect anticipated changes in caseloads.

## Sentencing review

The government has announced an independent sentencing review which will report its findings to the Lord Chancellor by Spring 2025.

**Look out for:** Changes to sentencing following the independent review.

## Court backlogs

We published an investigation on the Crown Court Backlog in May 2024, which found that the backlog is significant and growing. At the time of drafting this Overview the exact size of the backlog was not published. MoJ planned to publish revised statistics in December 2024 (page 14).

**Look out for:** Revised data on the size of the Crown Court backlog and how the government plans to reduce it.

## Prison capacity

In July 2024, the Lord Chancellor said that "prisons are on the point of collapse" following acute capacity pressure. In September, HMPPS implemented a temporary arrangement to free some prisoners with fixed term sentences when they had served 40% of their sentence, rather than 50%, freeing up approximately 5,500 prison places.

**Look out for:** MoJ intends to publish a 10-year capacity strategy at the end of 2024.

## Victim support

The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 introduced a provision for the establishment of an Independent Advocate to support victims of major incidents. The advocate is intended to be available around the clock and can be deployed quickly in the face of an emergency, advising victims on how to access vital financial, physical and mental health services and ensuring they understand their rights.

**Look out for:** Developments in the establishment of the advocate role.

# 17 More information about our work on MoJ

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## [Reducing the backlog in the Crown Court](#)

May 2024

This investigation examined the scale, nature and impact of the Crown Court backlog. It considered how MoJ and HMCTS are attempting to manage the backlog and their understanding of the impact of their actions.

We found that the backlog is significant and growing. At the time of drafting this Overview the exact size of the backlog was not published because of data quality issues.

## [Government's management of legal aid](#)

February 2024

This study evaluated the processes and information MoJ and the Legal Aid Agency have at their disposal to manage the overall legal aid system.

We found that MoJ does not know whether everyone eligible for legal aid can access it and that it needs to do more to ensure the sustainability of the legal aid market if it is to achieve value for money.

## [Increasing the capacity of the prison estate to meet demand](#)

December 2024

This study examined MoJ's and HMPPS's progress in expanding and maintaining the estate, their oversight and management of recent capacity pressures and future risks to the resilience of the estate.

We found the current crisis in the prison estate is a consequence of previous governments' failure to align criminal justice policies with funding for the prison estate, leading to reactive solutions which represent poor value for money.

## [Improving resettlement support for prison leavers to reduce reoffending](#)

May 2023

This study examined the government's effectiveness in resettling prison leavers, what factors were affecting service performance and what needed to be done to improve resettlement services in the future.

This report found that the government is not consistently supporting prison leavers in resettling into the community and that the quality of services has declined in recent years.

## [Progress on the courts and tribunals reform programme](#)

February 2023

This study examined HMCTS's progress on reform since 2019 and whether the reform programme was on course to achieve its expected benefits.

This report found that, following repeated delays, HMCTS's priority has been on delivering its reforms at pace rather than embedding sustainable change. Some services it has delivered are not working as efficiently as expected. HMCTS's understanding of the impact of reforms on users is limited.

## [Improving family court services for children](#)

Spring 2025

This study will examine whether MoJ and other bodies involved in the family court system in England and Wales are managing the service efficiently and effectively to improve outcomes for children.

It will look at the extent to which MoJ and others:

- understand demand and capacity within the family court system across England and Wales;
- have adopted a whole system approach to improve family courts performance; and
- understand and account for the needs of different groups within the family courts system.