

**Westminster Legal Policy Forum keynote seminar:  
Efficiency and tackling backlogs in the courts system in England and Wales**

Timing: Morning, Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025

\*\*\*Taking place online\*\*\*



**WESTMINSTER  
LEGAL POLICY  
FORUM**

Agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
**Lord Marks of Henley-on-Thames KC**, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson (Justice)
- 9.05 **Priorities for addressing key challenges for the court system in England and Wales**  
**Daniel Flury**, Operations Director, HM Courts and Tribunals Service  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Reducing the backlog in Crown Court - key findings and considerations for policy and practice**  
**Lee Summerfield**, Director, Responsive Audit and Investigations, National Audit Office
- 9.40 **The way forward for tackling court backlogs in England and Wales in the short-term**  
*priorities for the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts | addressing key challenges resulting in operational pressures | challenges for legal aid solicitors | assessing key findings from the Review for Civil Legal Aid | impact of court backlogs on victims, consumers, defendants and courtroom staff | key issues discussed in the Justice Committee's inquiry on the Work of the County Court | effect of increased caseloads on duty solicitors | current custody procedures for handling vulnerable defendants, witnesses and victims and possible options for reform | addressing concerns over legal aid fees in specific sectors such as housing and immigration | allocation of resources*  
**Penelope Gibbs**, Director, Transform Justice  
**Katy Hanson**, Managing Director, Welch & Co; and Vice-Chair, Criminal Law Solicitors' Association  
**Jeremy Bloom**, Consultant Solicitor, Duncan Lewis; and Director, Jeremy Bloom Legal Services  
**Rhiannon Mark**, Continuous Improvement Lead, Citizens Advice Witness Service  
**Dr Tamara Polajnar**, CEO, herEthical AI
- 10.05 Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.35 **Priorities for improving court proceedings and operations**  
**Sam Clark**, Director, Corporate Services, UK Supreme Court  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.55 **Chair's closing remarks**  
**Lord Marks of Henley-on-Thames KC**, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson (Justice)
- 11.00 Break
- 11.10 **Chair's opening remarks**  
**Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE KC**
- 11.15 **Next steps for the recruitment, retention and training of court operational staff**  
*increasing trained duty solicitors and courtroom staff | operational procedures of custody and trial administration | assessing the recruitment process in courts | addressing concerns around burnout due to increased caseloads | key challenges resulting in reduced sitting days | implementation of Operation Early Dawn and impact of pressures on custody and limited prison spaces | utilising technology in training*  
**Mary Prior KC**, Barrister and Head of Crime, 36 Group; and Chair, Criminal Bar Association  
**Neil McCallum**, Team Leader, Eunoia  
**Dr Jennifer Hough**, Senior Lecturer, School of Law and Policing, University of Central Lancashire  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.45 **Key considerations for the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts**  
**Richard Atkinson**, President, The Law Society
- 11.55 **Wider implementation of reform to improve the court system**  
*potential impact of a new intermediate court and other proposed reforms from the Independent Review so far | implementation and efficacy of the HMCTS Court Reform Programme | the future for court interpreting services | legal aid and advice deserts | scale and scope of magistrates' expansion of powers | assessing strategies to improve the time taken from making a claim to court hearings | options for technological advancements to improve court operations | implementation of ADR and required mediation as an integrated step in litigation procedures*  
**Tom Franklin**, Chief Executive, Magistrates' Association  
**Kelly Stricklin-Coutinho**, Barrister, 39 Essex Chambers; and Chair, Civil Mediation Council  
**Dia Thanki**, Founder and CEO, Alchemy Machines  
**Robert Thompson**, Partner, Brachers; and Chair, Civil Court Users Association  
**Dr Nimrod Ben-Cnaan**, Head, Policy and Profile, Law Centres Network
- 12.15 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.35 **The Independent Review - progress so far and priorities moving forward**  
**Shaun McNally CBE**, Expert Advisor, Independent Review of the Criminal Courts  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Legal Policy Forum closing remarks**  
**Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE KC**  
**Harry Nelson**, Westminster Legal Policy Forum