

Summary: Intervention & Options

Department /Agency: Ministry of Justice	Title: Impact Assessment of the closure of Leigh County Court	
Stage: Final Proposal	Version: 1.0	Date: 8 October 2009
Related Publications: Proposed closure of Leigh County Court		

Available to view or download at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk>

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What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary?

Maintaining a Court at Leigh has become operationally unviable and is no longer cost effective. Further, Leigh County Court no longer provides service levels that fully meet the expectations of court users. The Court is housed in a building which is no longer suitable for the provision of Court services. Further, Leigh County Court is considered to be under-utilised and generates insufficient workload.

What are the policy objectives and the intended effects?

The objective is to improve service provision for the Greater Manchester area by transferring jurisdictional responsibility for the Leigh area to the nearby Wigan and Warrington County Courts. Closure of Leigh County Court would generate savings for HMCS.

What policy options have been considered? Please justify any preferred option.

Excluding the do nothing base case, the only option considered is the closure of Leigh County Court and the transfer of its current work to the nearby Wigan and Warrington County Courts.

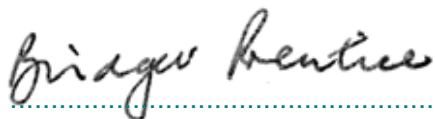
When will the policy be reviewed to establish the actual costs and benefits and the achievement of the desired effects?

If implemented, the policy will be reviewed within three years.

Ministerial Sign-off For Consultation stage Impact Assessments:

I have read the Impact Assessment and I am satisfied that, given the available evidence, it represents a reasonable view of the likely costs, benefits and impact of the leading options.

Signed by the responsible Minister:



Date: 10/10/09

Summary: Analysis & Evidence

Policy Option: 1

Description: Closure of Leigh County Court and transfer of work to Wigan and Warrington County Courts.

COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS		Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups' It is anticipated that there will be additional travel costs for users of Leigh County Court who under Option 1 will have to travel to Wigan or Warrington County Court.
	One-off (Transition)	Yrs	
	£		
	Average Annual Cost (excluding one-off)		
	£		Total Cost (PV) £
Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'			

BENEFITS	ANNUAL BENEFITS		Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups' The transfer of services to Wigan and Warrington County Courts would realise benefits for court users given the standard of court facilities at Wigan and Warrington are superior to Leigh. Closure of Leigh County Court would generate savings for HMCS.
	One-off	Yrs	
	£		
	Average Annual Benefit (excluding one-off)		
	£		Total Benefit (PV) £

Key Assumptions/Sensitivities/Risks

Price Base Year	Time Period Years	Net Benefit Range (NPV) £	NET BENEFIT (NPV Best estimate)
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What is the geographic coverage of the policy/option?	Greater Manchester			
On what date will the policy be implemented?				
Which organisation(s) will enforce the policy?	Ministry of Justice			
What is the total annual cost of enforcement for these organisations?	£			
Does enforcement comply with Hampton principles?	Yes			
Will implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?	No			
What is the value of the proposed offsetting measure per year?	£			
What is the value of changes in greenhouse gas emissions?	£			
Will the proposal have a significant impact on competition?	No			
Annual cost (£-£) per organisation (excluding one-off)	Micro	Small	Medium	Large
Are any of these organisations exempt?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Impact on Admin Burdens Baseline (2005 Prices)			(Increase - Decrease)		
Increase of	£	Decrease of	£	Net Impact	£

Key: Annual costs and benefits: Constant Prices (Net) Present Value

Evidence Base (for summary sheets)

[Use this space (with a recommended maximum of 30 pages) to set out the evidence, analysis and detailed narrative from which you have generated your policy options or proposal. Ensure that the information is organised in such a way as to explain clearly the summary information on the preceding pages of this form.]

1. Introduction

Scope of the proposals

This Impact Assessment assesses the costs and benefits of closing Leigh County Court, and transferring the work to Wigan and Warrington County Courts.

Organisations in the scope of the legislation

The proposed policy would have an impact on HM Courts Service, and specifically on Leigh and Wigan and Warrington County Courts.

2. Rationale for Proposals

Use of Leigh County Court has declined in recent years, to the extent that the court is now operating at a level of efficiency considered unsustainable. The accommodation at Leigh County Court is not considered adequate for the delivery of modern, customer focussed services. The cost of maintaining a presence in what is considered an unsuitable building is difficult to justify, particularly given the low number of Leigh County Court users.

The close proximity of Wigan and Warrington County Courts and the availability and quality of transport links means there should be no significant additional difficulties in travelling to YYYY from any part of Greater Manchester. Wigan and Warrington County Courts benefit from a wider range of facilities, and is able to offer a full range of services to the court user. Further, it is anticipated that the transfer of cases from Leigh to Wigan and Warrington could be handled by Wigan and Warrington County Courts.

Economic Rationale

The conventional economic approach to Government intervention is based on efficiency or equity arguments. Government intervenes if there is a perceived failure in the way a market operates ("market failures") or if it would like to correct existing institutional distortions ("government failures"). Government also intervenes for equity (fairness) reasons. Intervention in this case would be made to correct an existing institutional distortion: Leigh County Court is no longer being fully utilised, meaning closure is justified on efficiency grounds.

3. Cost Benefit Analysis

The Impact Assessment and requires that all options are assessed relative to a common 'base case' over the appropriate appraisal period of the relevant 'do-something' options.

A full assessment of the anticipated costs and benefits of the policy will be developed over the consultation period. This initial impact assessment describes the costs and benefits that the policy is expected to impose, and briefly describes the methods which will be used to identify these costs and benefits in a full cost benefit analysis. Comments relating to both the scope of costs and benefits presented, and the proposed analytical methods are welcomed.

Option 0: do nothing

Description

Under the do nothing base case, Leigh County Court would continue to operate as currently. As this is the base case against which Option 1 is assessed, there are no costs or benefits associated with this option.

Option 1: Closure of Leigh County Court

Description

Under this option, Leigh County Court would be closed, and the work of the court transferred to nearby Wigan and Warrington County Courts.

Costs

Travel costs

The transfer of services to Wigan and Warrington may impose increased travel costs for those attending court. The drivers of overall travel costs will include (a) the distance between Leigh and Wigan and Warrington County Courts; (b) the quality of transport links between Leigh and Wigan and Warrington County Courts; (c) the cost of transport in the Greater Manchester region; and (d) the number of users of Leigh County Court.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis will be used to calculate the distance between Leigh and Wigan and Warrington County Courts. Local information will also be used in conjunction with HMCS data to produce an overall estimate of the costs imposed by the closure of Leigh County Court.

Benefits

Releasing value

In line with Green Book guidance, closure of Leigh County Court will generate savings for HMCS. These savings will be quantified based on annual running costs of Leigh County Court and on a judgement on the extent to which Wigan and Warrington County Courts' running costs would increase, resulting from its additional workload.

Court users' court experience

The standard of accommodation at Leigh County Court falls short of the minimum requirement for the provision of services. Wigan and Warrington County Courts do not suffer from these problems. The proposal to transfer cases from Leigh to Wigan and Warrington should therefore improve the experience of all court users once at the court.

Waiting times

Transfer of work from Leigh County Court to Wigan and Warrington County Courts may reduce waiting times in the Greater Manchester area, via the reallocation of District Judge time. It would also allow increased flexibility in listing practices by increasing the use of "back to back lists."

Net Impact

To be determined in the final Impact Assessment based upon the results of the cost benefit analysis.

4. Impact Tests

Equality Impact

A draft Equality Impact Assessment Screening has been completed. The initial screening shows no expected negative impact on the various groups. This will be reviewed following the response to the consultation.

Rural Impact

Rural impacts will depend on the extent to which Leigh County Court users live in rural communities, and on the quality of transport links in the Greater Manchester region. These factors will be considered when assessing whether the closure of Leigh County Court will have a disproportionate travelling burden on rural communities.

Environmental Impacts

The additional environmental costs resulting from any additional travel by court users may be offset by reduced transport costs from court staff. The net environmental impact from changes to travel resulting from the closure of Leigh County Court will be assessed as part of the final Impact Assessment.

There may be some savings to the MoJ carbon budget upon closure of Leigh County Court. However, these are not considered significant.

Legal Aid

As the proposed policy only relates the location of court activity, there are no anticipated impacts relating to legal aid.

Other Impact Tests

The proposed policy is not expected to have a disproportionate impact on small firms, nor have a negative effect on competition. There are no expected health or human rights implications.

Specific Impact Tests: Checklist

Use the table below to demonstrate how broadly you have considered the potential impacts of your policy options.

Ensure that the results of any tests that impact on the cost-benefit analysis are contained within the main evidence base; other results may be annexed.

Type of testing undertaken	<i>Results in Evidence Base?</i>	<i>Results annexed?</i>
Competition Assessment	Yes	No
Small Firms Impact Test	Yes	No
Legal Aid	Yes	No
Sustainable Development	Yes	No
Carbon Assessment	Yes	No
Other Environment	Yes	No
Health Impact Assessment	Yes	No
Race Equality	No	Yes
Disability Equality	No	Yes
Gender Equality	No	Yes
Human Rights	Yes	No
Rural Proofing	Yes	No