



# HM Courts & Tribunals Service

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Susan Hall  
 Chair of the Police and Crime Committee  
 City Hall  
 London  
 SE1 2AA

***Sent by email***

24 April 2023

Dear Susan

## **Probation Services in London**

Thank you for your letter of 20<sup>th</sup> January together with your committee's report, *Probation Services in London*. I believe that it was initially sent to the wrong email address – hence the delay in this response.

Although the report is most welcome, and relevant to the work of HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and our wider criminal justice partners, the recommendations in the report are largely beyond the scope of my remit as CEO of HMCTS. The exception is recommendation 3, which is directed to HMCTS and others. I set it out below for convenience.

*His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service, the Magistrates Association and the London Probation Service should establish a joint mechanism to record and report on the quality of pre-sentence reports provided to sentencers in London Magistrates' Courts. This information should be used by the London Probation Service to drive improvements in the advice it provides to courts.*

As you would expect, HMCTS would be happy to support any mechanism by which the judiciary in the magistrates' courts provide feedback to the probation service on pre-sentence reports. The important pre-condition for this is judicial approval.

A pre-sentence report is written at the direction of the judiciary, and for the judiciary. The judiciary is independent of HMCTS which is why the implementation of this recommendation is not entirely in our gift. I note that the recommendation is also addressed to the Magistrates Association, and I have no doubt that the MA will be interested. However, the MA is an independent charity rather than a formal judicial governance group.

I would suggest that the first step would be for the probation service to obtain judicial approval, in principle, for the overall proposition. On the assumption that this is agreed, it is likely that the judiciary will want to have a substantial input into the development of the mechanism proposed, and ultimately judicial approval at a senior level will be required for whatever is agreed.

I know that the HMCTS Head of Crime and Head of Legal Operations for London works closely with the London Probation Service. I will ask Stephen McAllister, the Head of Legal Operations, to contact his colleagues in probation about facilitating the route to judicial engagement.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Goodwin'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N'.

**Nick Goodwin**  
Chief Executive, HM Courts & Tribunals Service