



HM Courts & Tribunals Service

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Robert Thompson
Chair, County Court Users Association
By email

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Dear Robert,

I thought I would take the opportunity to introduce myself and give you an update on Northampton Civil National Business Centre (CNBC) performance. As you are aware, the relocation of work from Salford County Court Money Claims Centre (CCMCC) to the Civil National Business Centre (CNBC) in May 2023 increased the volume of work processed at CNBC Northampton, which resulted in an increased number of late transfers to local courts and an increase in complaints. There was also an issue with the quality of the files being transferred to local courts. We understand the impact this has had on CCUA members' ability to progress cases and thank you for your patience and support during this time. I am sorry for the disruption it caused.

I am aware that you have been in contact throughout with the Delivery Director, Julia Hopkins and Head of Operations, Kirsty Swann who have been helping resolve issues and meet with you regularly to keep you and your members updated.

I am pleased to say that things are in a much better place now and this letter sets out what we have done, and are continuing to do, to improve and stabilise performance.

In September 2023, a recovery plan was implemented to reduce the age and volume of work. The two objectives of the plan were to improve case timeliness to 10 working days for our three primary workstreams (issues, defences, and directions questionnaires) by December 2023, and focus on filing and transfers to improve the quality of the work transferred to courts. We have added additional resource into the areas that needed it, and improved our processes, and as a result, we have seen significant improvements to our performance. The table below shows the performance improvements since July 2023, and progress achieved against the targets set for the end of March 2024. We are now working in or around 10 days for all priority workstreams.

Workstream	Age of oldest work (working days)	Age of oldest work (working days)	Age of work (working days)
	Week commencing 24 July 23	Week commencing 5 th Feb 24	Week Commencing 1 April 24
Issue of New Claims	37	9	12(due to issue with payments portal)
Defences	46	22	8
Directions Questionnaires	49	15	3

Transfer File	60	46	8
Help With Fees New Application	38	8	10
Acknowledgement of Service (paper)	29	1	1

We have made significant improvements regarding timeliness for transfers of files from 46 days in February to 8 days at the end of March. Due to a new transfer process being implemented in early February, a transfer notice will now only be sent with the file and the file will be quality checked to ensure all documents are present. If there are missing documents this will be highlighted, and parties will be asked to send the documents direct to the local court. We will only do this once a thorough search of all paper and emails received has been undertaken. We appreciate when this happens it is an inconvenience to parties, but this is the quickest way to ensure the case is progressed and sent to the local court to be listed for a hearing.

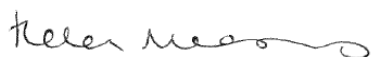
We are still working through our correspondence responses, applications, and orders to get these within 10 days. We would ask for your continued support in only contacting us if it is necessary where a case query is urgent. We have recently streamlined our email inboxes to ensure that your queries get to the right team directly. If you have sent an urgent query to the old email boxes and still need a reply, please email one of the new email boxes listed at the Annex of this letter. We publish our timeliness data [here](#) which should indicate the response times for all our areas of work.

In the Small Claims Mediation Service, to support the impacts of late transfers, we have been working with regions to offer re-referrals to mediation. Since February, the team have worked with the South East, London, North East, North West and Midlands to help ease current listing pressures by offering mediation to parties who have previously not opted to use the service. The team have listed around 2,000 additional mediation appointments, achieving a settlement rate of around 36% from this group.

Our priorities for the coming months will be to maintain work streams within 10 days as well as getting correspondence responses, applications and orders within those time frames. Julia and Kirsty will continue to meet you to provide regular updates on our performance as well as at our wider stakeholder meetings.

Please do continue to let Julia and Kirsty know of any ongoing issues from members. We always welcome your feedback and I know that this has been integral in helping us to change our processes to improve performance.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Measures
National Services Director