

Judicial Communications Office

STATEMENT BY THE LADY CHIEF JUSTICE

Issued to the Press on 19 June 2026

The Lady Chief Justice welcomes the announcement that the withdrawal of services has now concluded and has implemented recovery plans to restore Crown Court business as an immediate and pressing priority.

A preparatory period will be required to undertake essential preliminary work, including arraignments, pleas and sentences, and trial scheduling to maximise court capacity. It is essential that preparatory work is constructive in addressing and resolving outstanding matters. The Lady Chief Justices encourages active and collaborative engagement to narrow the core issues in cases proceeding to trial.

To support an efficient return to business Crown Court trials will be re-listed and prioritised, with those ready to proceed brought forward at the earliest opportunity. Particular emphasis will be placed on cases involving the most vulnerable individuals, while recognising that vulnerability is widely experienced and that difficult but necessary prioritisation decisions must be made in order to address the most urgent cases first.

The judiciary will work urgently and collaboratively with justice partners and stakeholders to restore Crown Court business as quickly and effectively as possible.

The adverse impact of delay and uncertainty upon participants within the criminal justice system is well established. The Lady Chief Justice has consistently highlighted the urgent need for additional resources to support the effective operation of the system and to mitigate delay. That need is now more acute than at any previous time.

ENDS

If you have any further enquiries about this or other court related matters please contact:

Chloe Bell
Judicial Communications Officer
Lady Chief Justice's Office
Royal Courts of Justice
Chichester Street
BELFAST
BT1 3JF

Judicial Communications Office

Telephone: 028 9072 5901
E-mail: Chloe.Bell@courtsni.gov.uk