



PRESS RELEASE: 28 July 2016 (For immediate publication)

**JUSTICE welcomes Briggs' Report:
Radical thinking needed to secure civil justice for all.**

Our civil courts have come under increasing strain due to budget cuts and the rise of litigants in person. In April 2015, in *'Delivering Justice in an Age of Austerity'*, a Working Party of JUSTICE members recommended that radical reform was necessary to secure access to the civil courts. In July 2015 the Lord Chief Justice and the Master of the Rolls asked Lord Justice Briggs to review the workings of the civil court system with a view to modernisation.

Today we welcome the Final Report on Civil Courts Structure Review ("the Briggs Report") and we look forward to working to take forward his recommendations and ours.

JUSTICE shares the concern that our civil courts are no longer fit for purpose. Radical restructuring must put access to justice, the rule of law and the experience of the user at the heart of our civil justice system.

JUSTICE warmly welcomes the Briggs Report – and its 62 recommendations - as a step towards achieving access to justice for ordinary people and moving our civil courts into the 21st century.

JUSTICE has recommended development of an integrated online and telephone platform offering legal information, advice and assistance and we support Lord Justice Briggs' recommendation to bring forward the Online Court (Recommendation 5). JUSTICE also welcomes Lord Justice Briggs' recognition that qualified, independent case officers should assist litigants through the court system (Recommendation 28), taking up recommendations of our Working Party.

Andrea Coomber, Director of JUSTICE, said:

"We commend the judiciary's commitment to innovation. The challenge now lies in effective implementation of Lord Justice Briggs' recommendations. The Treasury's allocation of funds for a wide-ranging programme of reform is encouraging. Our civil justice system must be fit for purpose and open to all."

Notes to editors

1. JUSTICE is an all-party law reform and human rights organisation working to strengthen the justice system – administrative, civil and criminal – in the United Kingdom. For more information about JUSTICE visit www.justice.org.uk.

2. The Working Party for [Delivering Justice in the Age of Austerity](#) included: The Rt. Hon Sir Stanley Burnton, Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC, Andrea Coomber, Carlos Dabezies, Amanda Finlay CBE, Professor Rosemary Hunter FAcSS, Sir Paul Jenkins KCB QC, Andrew Lidbetter, Andrew Lockley, Ruchi Parekh, Nigel Fleming QC, Lucy Scott-Moncrieff CBE and Professor Richard Susskind OBE. Their work was generously supported by Herbert Smith Freehills.
3. Please direct all queries to Angela Patrick, Director of Human Rights Policy, JUSTICE on apatrick@justice.org.uk or 020 7762 6415.
4. Lord Justice Briggs' final report can be found [here](#), and a press summary by Courts and Tribunals Judiciary [here](#). Recommendations include:
 - Bringing forward an Online Court that litigants can navigate themselves for non-complex monetary claims worth up to £25,000,
 - The provision of courts-based private mediation services,
 - Introducing case officers, legally-trained court officials who will perform certain judicial functions,
 - A single court for the enforcement of civil judgments and orders,
 - No general unification of the civil courts,
 - The District Registry should eventually be replaced with a single Portal for the issue of all civil proceedings and then abolished,
 - There should be a review of whether the recent procedural reforms to the Court of Appeal ought to be extended to cover appeals to the High Court and to Circuit judges in the County Court,
 - The Family Court should share jurisdiction with the Chancery Division and the County Court for inheritance and home co-ownership claims. Jurisdictional anomalies between the Property Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal and the civil courts should be resolved. There is a case for convergence between employment tribunals and the civil courts.