

# Courts and tribunals service centres to pilot longer hours

- Service centres will now operate 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday
- They will open on Saturdays for the first time
- More than 500,000 queries answered in the first year

Anyone who has a query about divorce, probate or social security and child support can now receive help from dedicated staff between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 2pm on Saturdays. Previously, the service centres were only open on weekdays between 9am and 5pm.

The extended opening hours are part of a pilot to gauge the demand for services outside normal working hours, and whether opening for longer provides an improved service experience for the public.

Justice Minister, Chris Philp MP, said

These centres are already making a real difference to how we administer justice with more than 500,000 queries being answered in the last year alone.

Opening them for longer will ensure people receive the support they need without disrupting their busy lives. We want to make sure the court system provides the best service for those who use it.

Service centres were introduced as part of HMCTS's £1bn programme to reform courts and tribunals. They act as the administrative backbone of the justice system by bringing a number of services together under one roof to offer an improved and more consistent experience for victims, witnesses, and anyone who uses the court and tribunals system.

The first two service centres opened in Stoke and Birmingham in January 2019 with a third due to open in Loughborough in Spring.

## **Notes to editors:**

- HMCTS will collect information and analyse data throughout the course of the pilot on contact volumes, types of call and why people were calling. It will also conduct surveys to assess feedback received from staff.
- At the end of the pilot the evidence gathered will be assessed to determine whether service centres should proceed with extended opening hours.