



# **Crown Court**

Annual Report 2006 - 2007

## **Preston Crown Court**

# Preston Crown Court

## Annual Report by the Resident Judge and Court Manager

### RESIDENT JUDGE & COURT MANAGER COMMENTS:

The court has operated with a full complement of circuit judges during the past year and has not suffered the problem of an exceptionally long case which affected the statistics in the previous year. However it should always be noted when considering the statistics that Preston Crown Court operates two satellite courts, at Lancaster Castle where one court sits for most of the year and at Barrow-in-Furness where one court sits for one week a month in most months. Inevitably such an arrangement has an adverse effect on overall disposal figures and jury waiting figures.

In the past year there has been a substantial increase in the workload with a significant increase in the trial receipts and large increases in the number of sentence and appeal receipts. This increase in the number of cases received has resulted in the number of outstanding trials increasing, but a further factor which will have influenced this figure is the fact that the average length of trials has increased. There have also been significant increases in court time taken up with non-trial work – appeals are taking longer, there are more breach hearings in the Crown Court as a result of the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and there are more ancillary hearings such as those pursuant to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The court is operating at full capacity so if this trend continues delay is likely to increase. It is pleasing that despite the increasing workload the good disposal rate has been maintained this year. Class 1 cases are regularly transferred to other court centres on the Northern Circuit to achieve a speedy trial, and where appropriate other types of case are transferred also.

It remains disappointing to note that automatic and judicial directions as to the service of evidence remain regularly ignored by the police and the CPS, and to a lesser extent the defence, as was noted in last year's report. Undoubtedly there are resource problems, and it should be observed that in complex cases the timescales set in the rules are unrealistic, so the targets are incapable of being achieved. This is most apparent in any case where expert evidence is necessary. It is unusual for the prosecution to have all its scientific or medical evidence available at the time of the PCMH, particularly in cases sent for trial. Delays in obtaining authorisation from the Legal Services Commission for funding of defence expert reports is a further factor which leads to delay. The idea that cases should be trial ready at the PCMH is unduly optimistic. The introduction of certificates of readiness has resulted in a lower ineffective trial rate than had been the case, but it seems that this is not likely to be reduced much further. Analysis of these cases shows that apart from illness of defendants or witnesses the usual reason for an ineffective trial is loss of contact with witnesses or defendants and occasionally inadequate preparation. There are regular meetings with the police and CPS to address these issues and they are raised at Court User meetings.

Jury utilisation has improved, and although the witness waiting time has slightly worsened, nonetheless Preston performs very well in this regard. The increase in the percentage of witnesses attending unnecessarily probably reflects the cracked trial rate, and the main reason for trials cracking is the fact that the witnesses attend at court. All recent surveys have indicated high levels of satisfaction amongst jurors and witnesses.

There are no significant problems with the Prison Escort Contract. There have been occasional delays, usually in producing women prisoners from Styal, but these are few and far between and are usually resolved with the minimum of further delay and willing co-operation. However there are problems for defence lawyers and probation officers securing appointments for interviews of defendants on remand which has resulted in the adjournment of hearings. Further there are increasing delays in obtaining psychiatric reports, partly because of the need for more such reports because of the dangerousness provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and partly because of the difficulty of arranging suitable appointments for defendants on remand.

The Court maintains close relations with local schools and the two universities in the area. There are regular court visits and the judges and court staff regularly speak at schools, colleges and community events. The judges and court staff play an active role in "Inside Justice Week" each November with court open days and other events. Six of the local judges are magistrates liaison judges. The local Area Judicial Forum is active and much appreciated by the Magistracy. Good relations are maintained with the Prison Authorities, Probation, Police and the CPS. The local bar and solicitors have access to the resident judge when desired in addition to representation on the Court Users Group which meets regularly.

All the judges sitting at Preston are IT trained and most use IT regularly in and out of court. The Xhibit and Link System operate successfully. There have been problems with compatibility of electronic evidence and the court equipment but these have been addressed. Improved video link equipment has been installed in some of the courts which has enabled the use of courtrooms to be more flexible.

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The accommodation at Preston is generally first class. Two courts have been upgraded to be made accessible for disabled defendants, so that it is now possible for disabled defendants who are in custody to be triad with dignity in Preston, and suitable cases are being taken from across the circuit. I repeat the request that priority be given to providing sufficient judicial accommodation for each judge who sits at Preston to have his or her own "office" if not full chambers. At the moment there is doubling up and with the increased workload and amount of paperwork that each judge must cope with it is not satisfactory to have judicial "squatters".

In the past year Preston Crown Court received a number of accolades. The multi agency team which organised the "Cockle-Pickers" Trial was awarded the "Justice Shield" at the annual Justice Awards. The Court Staff who played a major role in this are to be congratulated. An individual long service award was made to Bob Brooks, Facilities and Administration Manager, who also received the MBE in the New Year Honours. These awards reflect the very high standards achieved by all the staff at this court who display great loyalty and work extremely hard. Similarly the judges who sit here are enthusiastic and hard-working and the success of this court can only be maintained by a continuation of the same high standards shown by all associated with it.

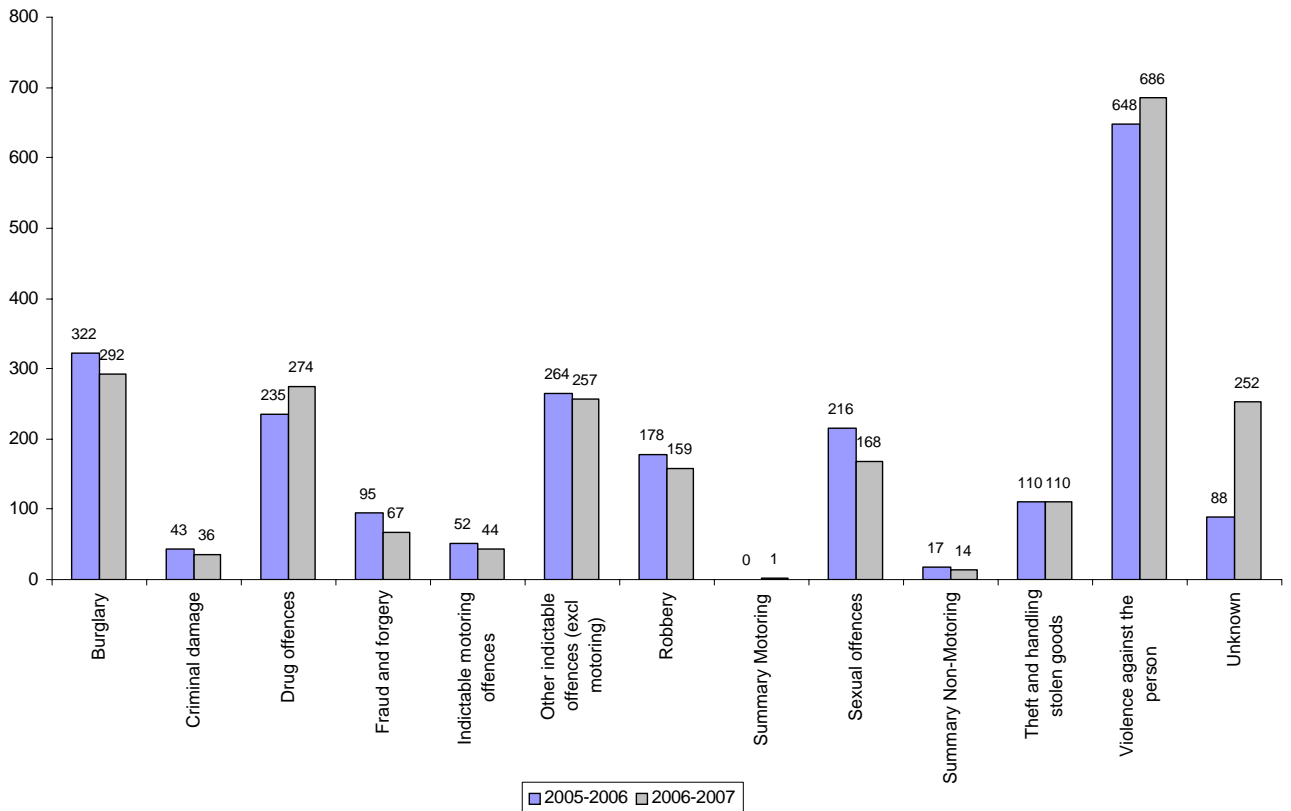
RESIDENT JUDGE:	His Honour Judge Russell QC Honorary Recorder of Preston	DATE:	_____
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COURT MANAGER:	Alan Thompson	DATE:-	_____
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**Preston Crown Court**  
Annual Report by the Resident Judge and Court Manager

**Crown Court Receipts by Offence Group**

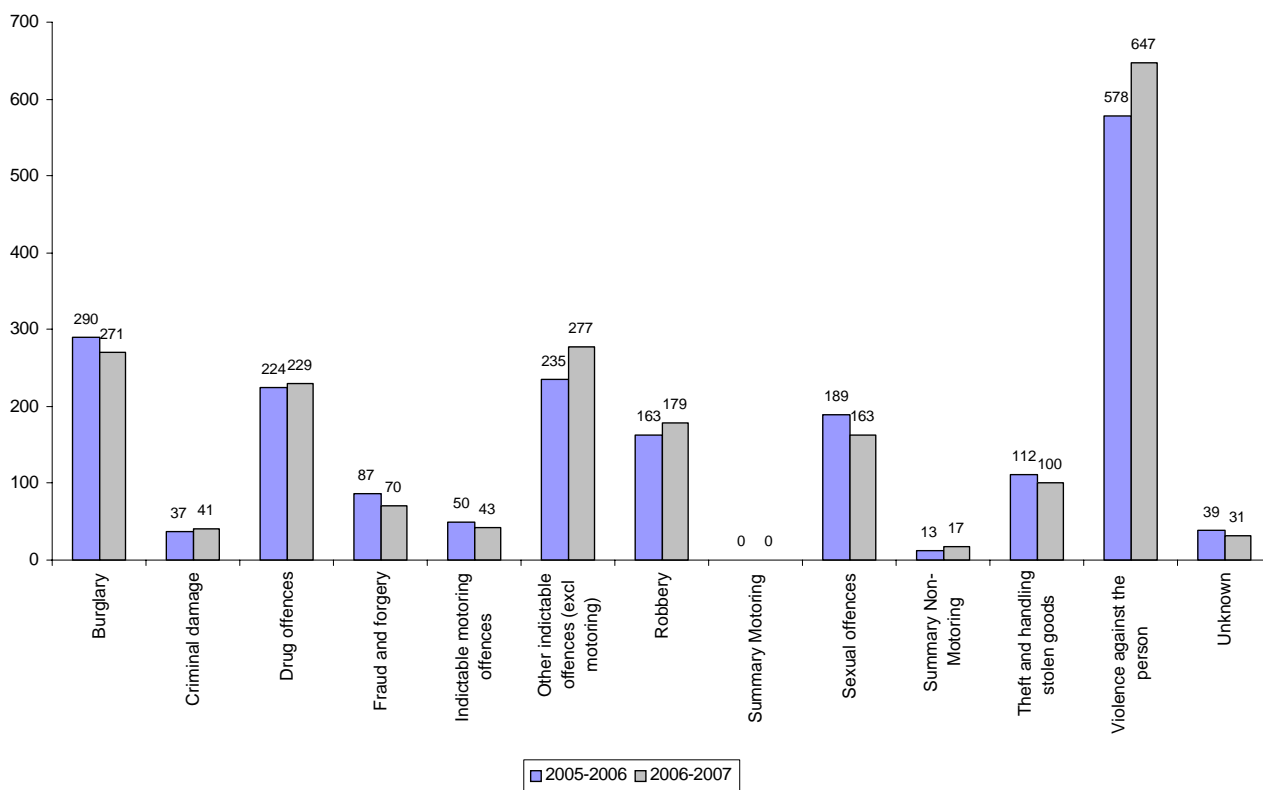
Group	2005-2006	% of Total	2006-2007	% of Total
Burglary	322	14%	292	12%
Criminal damage	43	2%	36	2%
Drug offences	235	10%	274	12%
Fraud and forgery	95	4%	67	3%
Indictable motoring offences	52	2%	44	2%
Other indictable offences (excl motoring)	264	12%	257	11%
Robbery	178	8%	159	7%
Summary Motoring	0	0%	1	0%
Sexual offences	216	10%	168	7%
Summary Non-Motoring	17	1%	14	1%
Theft and handling stolen goods	110	5%	110	5%
Violence against the person	648	29%	686	29%
Unknown	88	4%	252	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2268</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2360</b>	<b>100%</b>



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**Crown Court Disposals by Offence Group**

Group	2005-2006	% of Total	2006-2007	% of Total
Burglary	290	14%	271	13%
Criminal damage	37	2%	41	2%
Drug offences	224	11%	229	11%
Fraud and forgery	87	4%	70	3%
Indictable motoring offences	50	2%	43	2%
Other indictable offences (excl motoring)	235	12%	277	13%
Robbery	163	8%	179	9%
Summary Motoring	0	0%	0	0%
Sexual offences	189	9%	163	8%
Summary Non-Motoring	13	1%	17	1%
Theft and handling stolen goods	112	6%	100	5%
Violence against the person	578	29%	647	31%
Unknown	39	2%	31	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2068</b>	<b>100%</b>



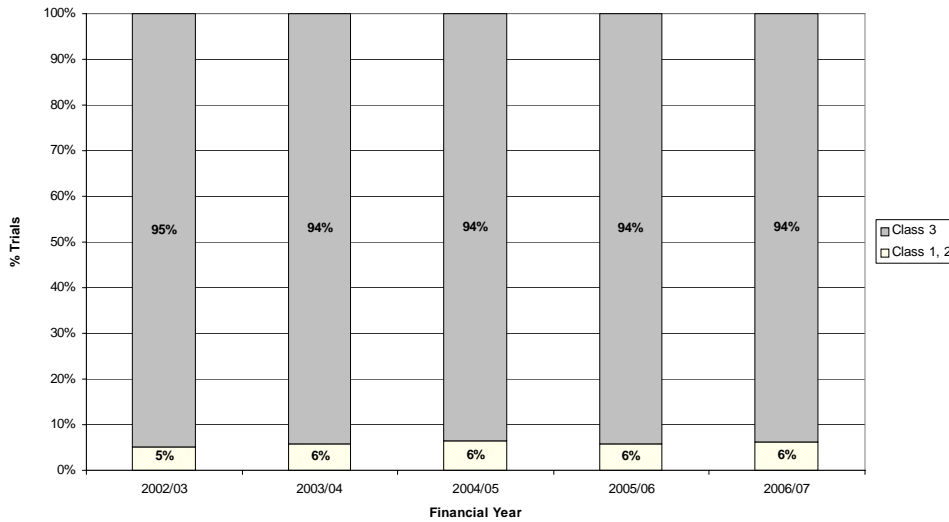
# Preston Crown Court

## Annual Report by the Resident Judge and Court Manager

### Workload

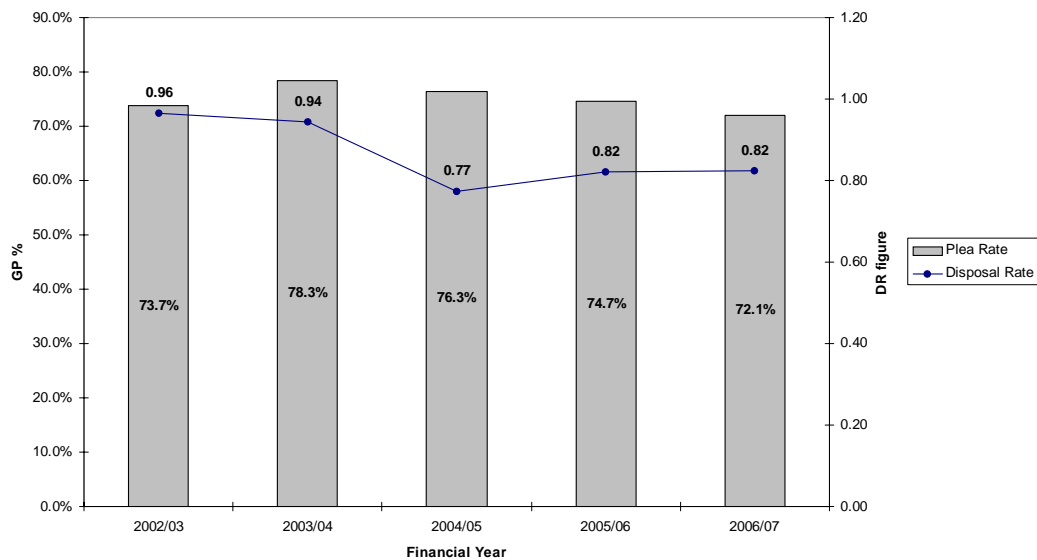
	EW 06/07	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	% Diff
Trial Receipts	77,765	2,413	2,312	2,042	2,274	2,366	4.0%
Class 1, 2	6%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	5.6%
Class 3	94%	95%	94%	94%	94%	94%	-0.3%

Trial Receipts by Class



	EW 06/07	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	% Diff
Sentence Receipts	35,959	733	730	700	770	992	28.8%
Appeal Receipts	13,004	306	293	332	385	446	15.8%
Disposals	79,045	2,642	2,400	2,036	2,236	2,245	0.4%
Plea Rate	66%	73.7%	78.3%	76.3%	74.7%	72.1%	-3.5%
Disposal Rate	0.75	0.96	0.94	0.77	0.82	0.82	0.3%

Guilty Plea Rate and Disposal Rate



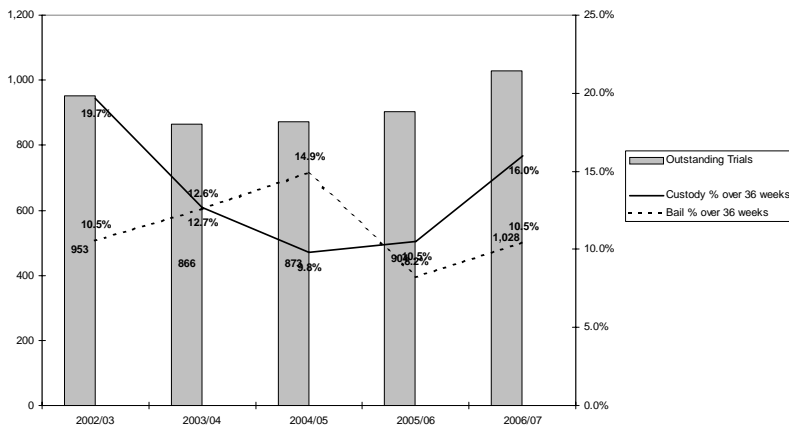
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## Annual Report by the Resident Judge and Court Manager

### Outstanding Cases

	EW 06/07	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	% Diff
Outstanding Trials	31,593	953	866	873	904	1,028	13.7%
Custody % over 16 weeks	27%	21.3%	26.4%	27.5%	29.9%	36.0%	20.2%
Custody % over 36 weeks	10%	19.7%	12.7%	9.8%	10.5%	16.0%	52.5%
Bail % over 16 weeks	30%	27.4%	27.2%	26.8%	29.3%	31.0%	5.9%
Bail % over 36 weeks	13%	10.5%	12.6%	14.9%	8.2%	10.5%	27.4%

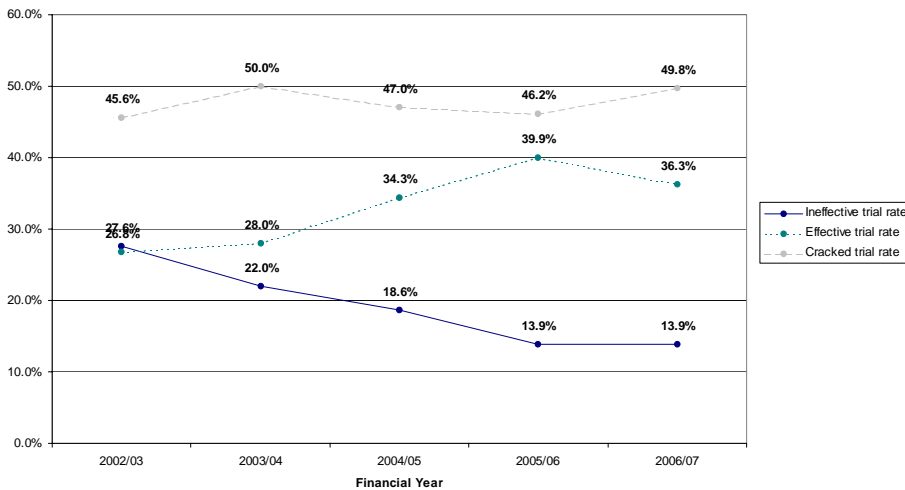
Outstanding Cases and the proportion over 36 weeks



### Cracked and Ineffective

	EW 06/07	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	% Diff
Trials listed (number)	37,149	1,800	1,349	1,089	914	936	2.4%
Ineffective trial rate	12%	27.6%	22.0%	18.6%	13.9%	13.9%	0.0%
Effective trial rate	48%	26.8%	28.0%	34.3%	39.9%	36.3%	-9.0%
Cracked trial rate	39%	45.6%	50.0%	47.0%	46.2%	49.8%	7.8%

Ineffective, Effective and Cracked Trials



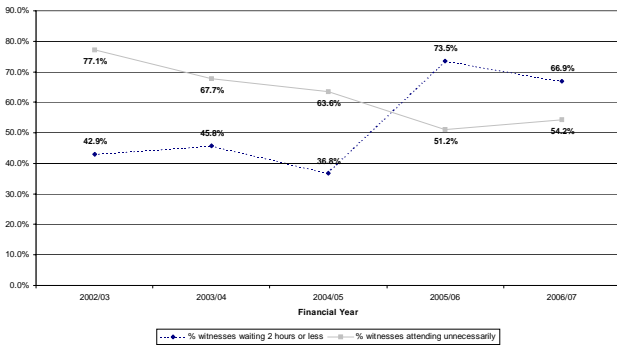
# Preston Crown Court

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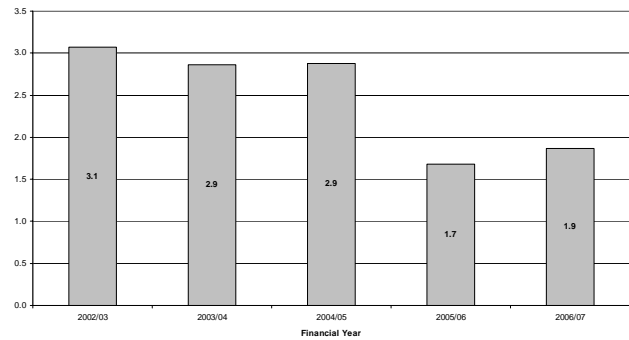
### Witness and Juror service<sup>1</sup>

	EW 06/07	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	% Diff
Juror days as % of attendance	60%	60.7%	49.9%	62.2%	60.7%	63.9%	5.3%
% witnesses waiting 2 hours or less	48.0%	42.9%	45.8%	36.8%	73.5%	66.9%	-9.0%
% witnesses attending unnecessarily	43.2%	77.1%	67.7%	63.6%	51.2%	54.2%	5.9%
Hours waited (witnesses attending unnecessarily)	2.7	3.1	2.9	2.9	1.7	1.9	11.0%

Percentage of Witnesses Waiting Within Target and Proportion Waiting Unnecessarily



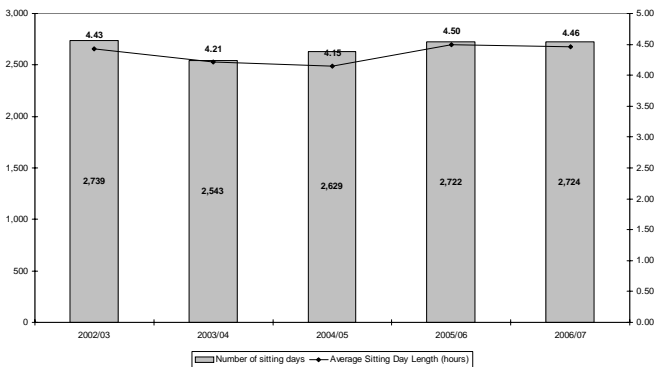
Average Waiting Time for Witnesses Attending Unnecessarily (hours)



### Sitting Days

	EW 06/07	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	% Diff
Average Trial Hearing Time (hours)	9.6	11.1	8.8	12.7	9.8	10.0	2.1%
Average Sitting Day Length (hours)	4.37	4.43	4.21	4.15	4.50	4.46	-0.8%
Number of sitting days	105,629	2,739	2,543	2,629	2,722	2,724	0.1%

Number of Sitting Days & Average Length of Sitting Day



<sup>1</sup> Witness Survey data are from the combined June and November survey  
Preston Crown Court

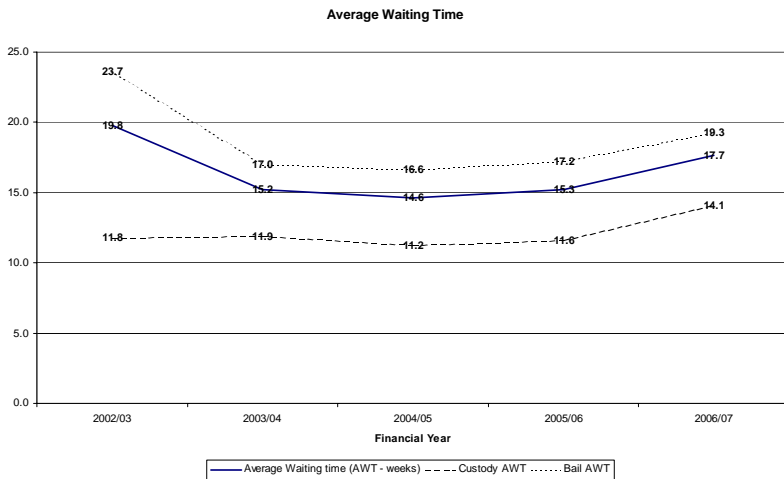


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### Waiting Times

	EW 06/07	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	% Diff
Average Waiting time (AWT - weeks)	17.0	19.8	15.2	14.6	15.3	17.7	15.9%
Custody AWT	13.8	11.8	11.9	11.2	11.6	14.1	21.2%
Bail AWT	18.7	23.7	17.0	16.6	17.2	19.3	12.0%



### PSAs

	EW 06/07	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	% Diff
% Defendants commencing in target	75.4%	67.2%	79.2%	80.4%	78.5%	73.3%	-6.6%
Committal for Trial	67.0%	59.8%	76.5%	75.8%	72.7%	65.3%	-10.3%
Sent for Trial	73.5%	68.2%	78.4%	81.5%	78.3%	70.7%	-9.6%
Committal for Sentence	89.9%	78.0%	83.0%	81.6%	86.7%	91.2%	5.1%
Appeal	86.2%	85.9%	90.2%	96.5%	91.9%	87.0%	-5.3%

