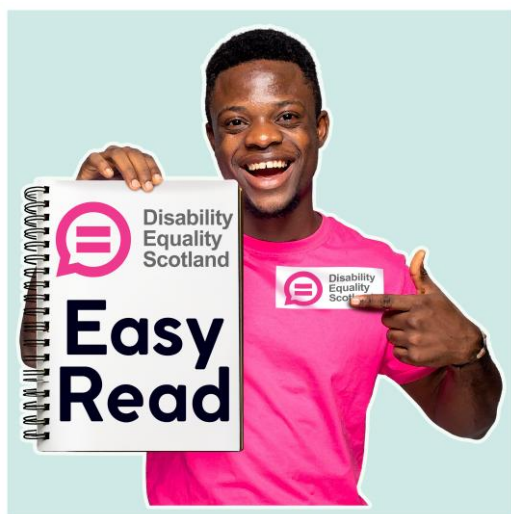


# Easy Read Report

## Work on the backlog in criminal courts since the last report

May 2026



 AUDIT SCOTLAND

## About this document



This is an Easy Read document.



It is a **report**.

**Reports** tell us how something is going, like a project.



This report was written by Audit Scotland to say what work has been done to sort out a problem.

## About the problem



**Criminal courts** are places where a judge or Sheriff looks at facts to decide if someone has broken the law or not.



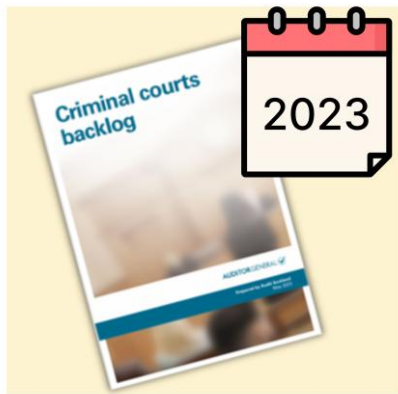
Criminal courts could not work as normal during the COVID-19 pandemic.



This meant that there was a **backlog** of cases after the pandemic ended.



A **backlog** means a list of cases that still need to be dealt with.



Audit Scotland wrote a report about the backlog in 2023.

The report said there needed to be changes.



This report says:

- which changes have happened
- what work has been done

## Our report



Work in criminal courts in Scotland has changed a lot.



This is because there are now more complicated crimes like:

- abuse that happened a long time ago
- serious crimes by groups of criminals



These kinds of criminal cases take:

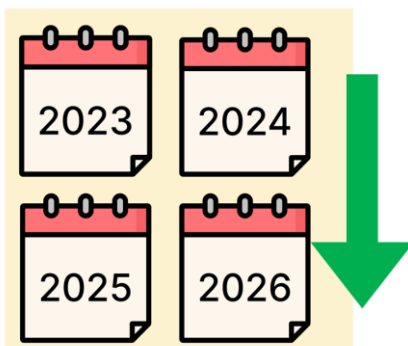
- a lot of time
- a lot of money
- more staff



This puts a lot of pressure on the whole criminal courts system.



We looked at the number of cases where a court date has been decided but the case is still waiting to be dealt with.



The number of cases has gone down a lot since 2023.



But in **the High Court** this number has gone up because of more complicated crimes.



**The High Court** is the criminal court in Scotland which deals with the most serious crimes, like murder and rape.



We looked at how long people need to wait before a case is dealt with.



The waiting times are shorter than they were in the last report.

But they are still longer than they were before the pandemic.

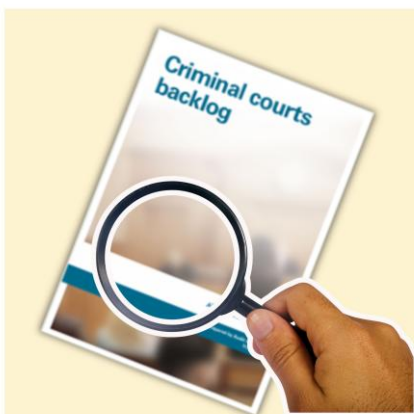


The Scottish Government has made new laws and a plan to help make things work better.

Organisations need to make sure that their plans to help make things better:



- have enough staff
- have enough money
- have good changes
- work well with plans from other organisations



We looked at the changes we had asked for in the 2023 report.



We saw that sometimes there were not enough people to do the work.



We saw that not much has been done to look at how this work affects people who use the courts.



We saw that some work was difficult because there were many:

- projects
- organisations to work with
- different ways of working



We saw that people who use the courts are helping with some of the work.

But they are not part of all the work.



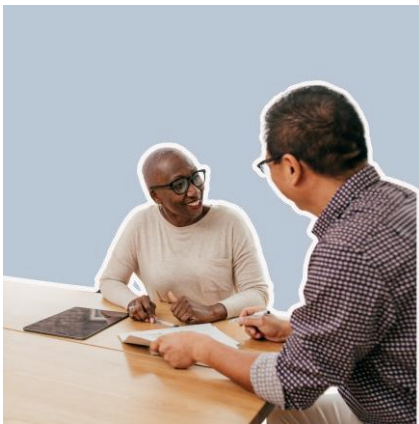
We saw that there are not many reports or checks on how things went.

## Things that make change harder and easier



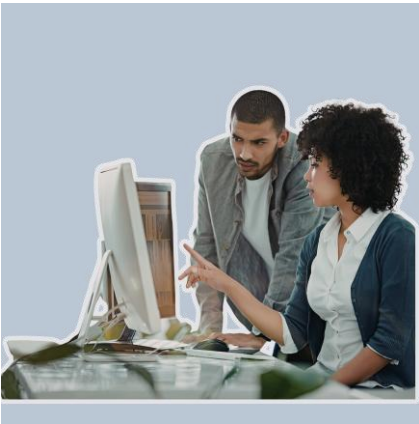
We saw that it could be harder to make changes if:

- money and staff are not used well
- other parts of the system are having a difficult time, like prisons and **legal aid**



**Legal aid** means legal help that is paid for by public money.

We saw that these things could make it easier to make changes:



- better technology – like systems, websites and software
- making sure that projects which are designed to make change happen get done



- using the facts and information collected by everyone in the system
- new laws
- organisations working well together



This is the end of this Easy Read report by Audit Scotland.

p7 High Court photo courtesy of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

