



Durham Crown Court

Durham Crown Court
Annual Report by the Resident Judge and Court Manager

RESIDENT JUDGE & COURT MANAGER COMMENTS:

Capacity

The number of cases at the end of the financial year stands higher than last year, but at 182 it is considered to be about the optimum number to list effectively across the two courts. The number is increasing, and will have to be kept under review lest the backlog become too great. With the redistribution of work from South Durham, our position has become much improved.

Cracked and Ineffective trials.

Cracked trials remain high. The monitoring questionnaire has failed to highlight a pattern of avoidable cracked trials. The predominant causes are simple change of heart by a Defendant, or the reluctance of pros witnesses to give evidence, leading to the acceptance at trial of a plea to a lesser offence.

Ineffective trials were running at a reduced rate of 16% until the last stages of the year, when a small number of cases adversely affected the overall figures. The court and the CPS consider monthly analysis of the reasons, which are usually due to the failure of a witness or defendant to attend, or the late service of additional evidence.

Judicial opposition to taking a case out on the day of trial is firm, both in the full time and part time judiciary.

Working with Court Users

In addition to twice yearly meetings of Court Users, whose membership is broad, monthly meetings are held with CPS, police and witness service to concentrate on improving witness care. Staff help train new witness support volunteers. There has been exchange of personnel with Police Records management Unit and magistrates courts.

School visits

We have had 150 undergraduates, 130 6th formers, a number of trainee probation officers, trainee prison officers and probationer police officers at court, who have received some instruction from staff as to the working of the Crown Court. Court staff also manned an information stall at a local Asian Festival.

Accommodation

The positioning of the witness waiting facilities in a building outside the courthouse but adjacent gives rise to annoying waits when a witness is called into court earlier than expected, but it is more satisfactory than having waiting witnesses in the building, where they cannot be segregated from others.

IT

New computers are installed in the office, in the courts and chambers, which are working satisfactorily. They are ready for increased potential when EXHIBIT is 'rolled out'. All staff now have e-mail capability.

Dock Security

Three incidents where a prisoner has jumped from the dock in court have raised concerns. In the most recent the prisoner almost managed to climb up onto the bench. We await a decision on funding for a secure dock, and any implications that our Listed Building status may bring

General

We continue to put through a high volume of Crown Court business considering our size, with satisfactory waiting times .

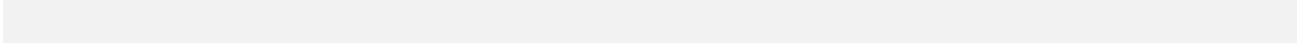
RESIDENT JUDGE: R P Lowden

DATE: 19 May 2004

COURT MANAGER: S Stamp

DATE:- 19 May 2004

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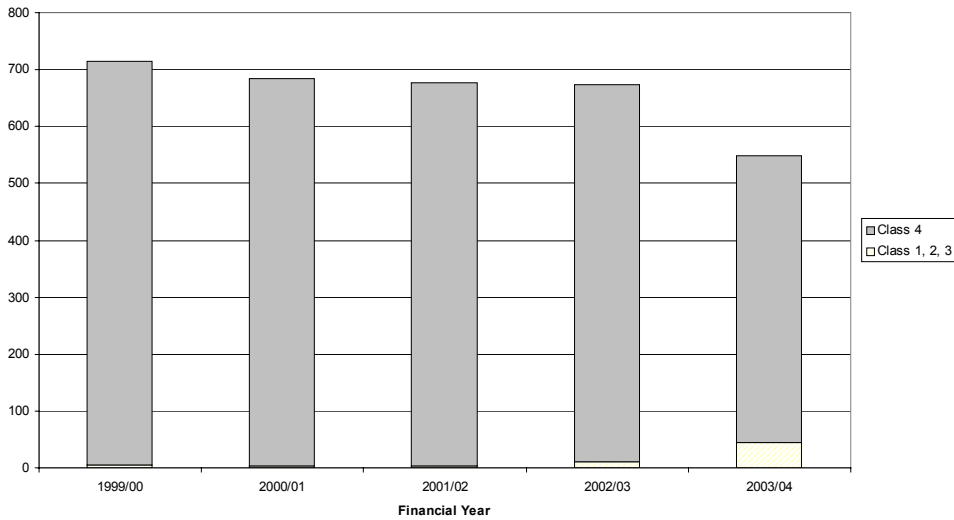
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Workload

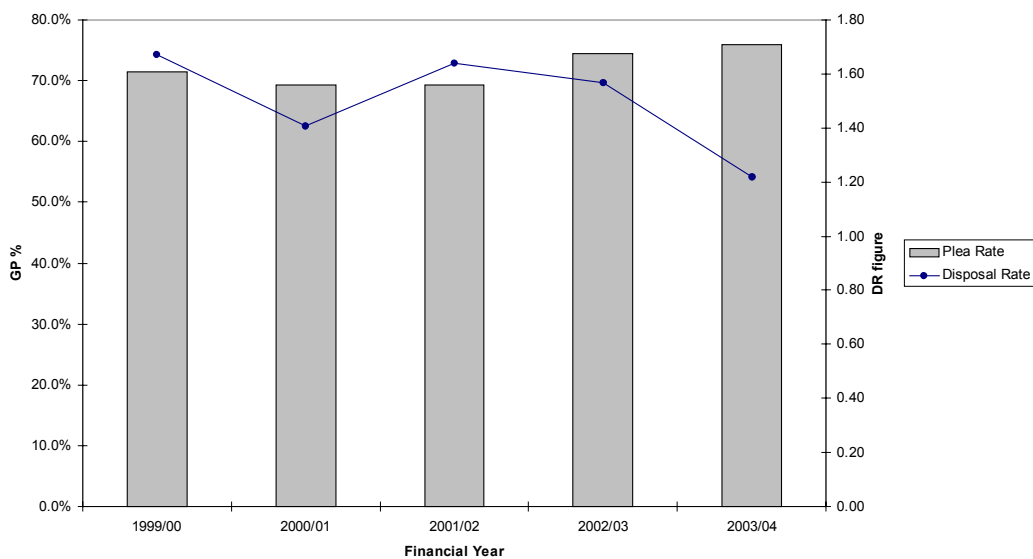
	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Trial Receipts	83,813	714	684	677	673	549	-18.4%
Class 1, 2, 3	11,642	5	3	4	11	45	309.1%
Class 4	72,171	709	681	673	662	504	-23.9%

Trial Receipts by Class



	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Sentence Receipts	31,919	308	271	331	268	205	-23.5%
Appeal Receipts	12,019	161	171	118	128	76	-40.6%
Disposals	83,247	718	650	786	724	501	-30.8%
Plea Rate	57.9%	71.4%	69.4%	69.4%	74.5%	75.8%	1.8%
Disposal Rate	0.82	1.67	1.41	1.64	1.57	1.22	-22.2%

Guilty Plea Rate and Disposal Rate

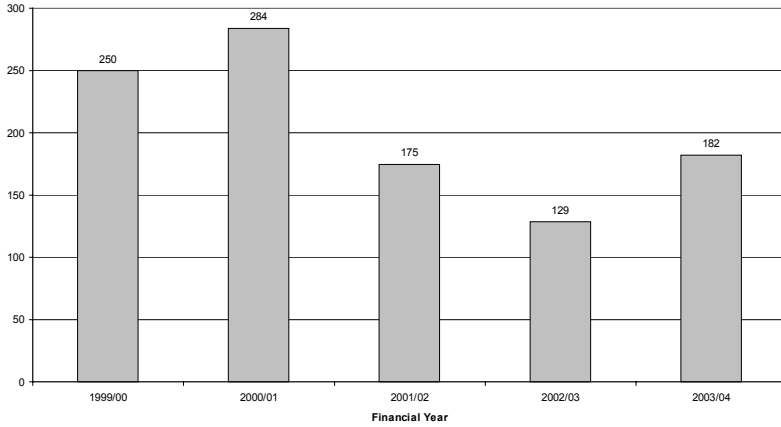


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	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Outstanding Trials	29,752	250	284	175	129	182	41.1%

Outstanding Trials



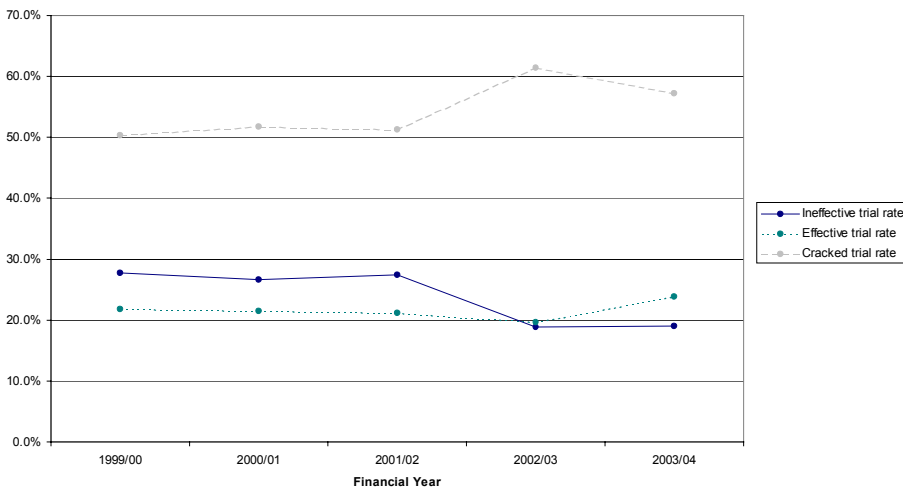
Stale Cases

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
% trials outstanding over 16 weeks	39.3%	40.4%	43.3%	21.7%	41.9%	28.0%	-33.1%
% trials outstanding over 48 weeks	5.0%	4.4%	12.0%	4.0%	4.7%	2.2%	-52.7%

Cracked and Ineffective

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Trials listed (number)	51,232	530	446	485	418	294	-29.7%
Ineffective trial rate	20.6%	27.7%	26.7%	27.4%	18.9%	19.0%	0.8%
Effective trial rate	41.0%	21.9%	21.5%	21.2%	19.6%	23.8%	21.4%
Cracked trial rate	38.3%	50.4%	51.8%	51.3%	61.5%	57.1%	-7.1%

Ineffective, Effective and Cracked Trials



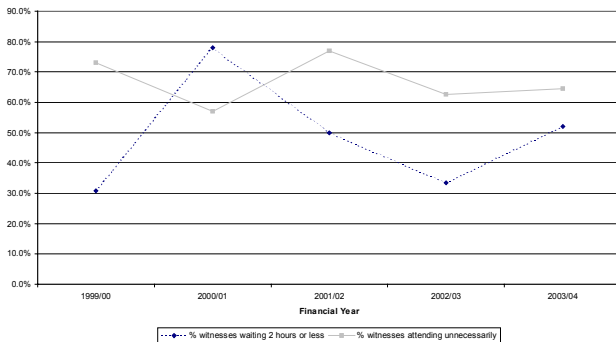
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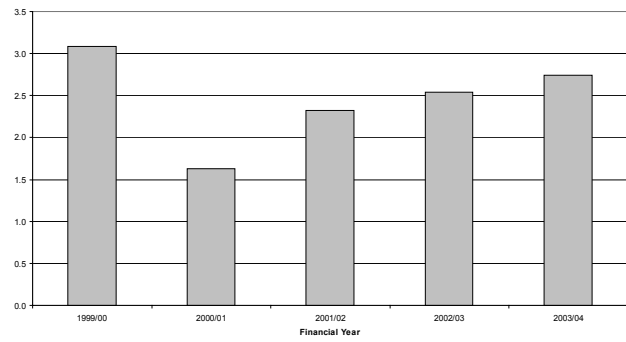
Witness and Juror service

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Days jurors sit as a % of attendance and non attendance	59.3%	52.1%	46.9%	38.6%	32.4%	39.0%	20.2%
% witnesses waiting 2 hours or less	51.8%	30.8%	78.0%	50.0%	33.3%	52.0%	56.0%
% witnesses attending unnecessarily	44.5%	73.2%	56.9%	76.9%	62.5%	64.5%	3.2%
Average waiting time for witnesses attending unnecessarily (hours)	2.7	3.1	1.6	2.3	2.5	2.7	8.2%

Percentage of Witnesses Waiting Within Target and Proportion Waiting Unnecessarily



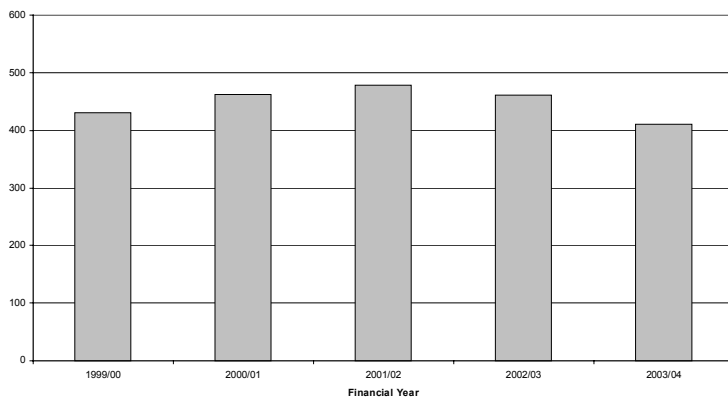
Average Waiting Time for Witnesses Attending Unnecessarily (hours)



Sitting Days

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Average Trial Hearing Time (hours)	9.6	4.4	4.8	4.5	3.5	6.1	76.7%
Average Guilty Plea Hearing Time (hours)	1.2	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	11.5%
Average Sitting Day Length (hours)	4.33	4.40	4.09	3.98	3.57	3.68	3.3%
Number of sitting days	101,320	430	462	479	462	411	-11.1%

Number of Sitting Days



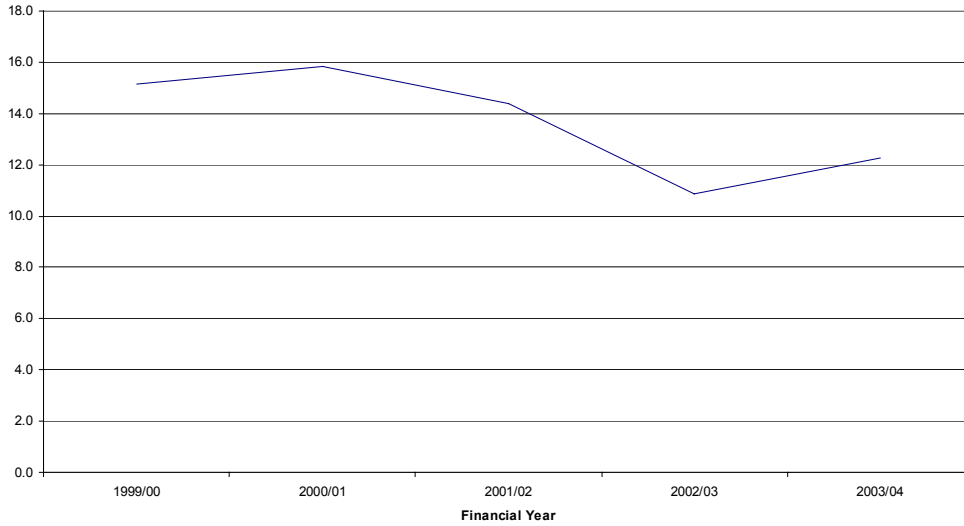
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PSAs

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Average Waiting time (weeks)	15.1	15.1	15.9	14.4	10.9	12.3	12.9%
% Defendants commencing in target	79.4%	74.2%	69.7%	77.7%	89.5%	85.8%	-4.2%

Average Waiting Time



Percentage Cases Commencing Within Target
(Trials 16 weeks, Sent for Trial 26 weeks, Sentence 10 weeks, Appeal 14 weeks)

