# Ministry of Justice Activates Operation Early Dawn to Address Prison Overcrowding Crisis



Court Hearings Delayed and Suspects Potentially Freed Amid Prison Overcrowding Crisis

**Location:** England
**Date:** Tuesday, [Specific Date]
**Event:** Activation of Operation Early Dawn
**Responsible Entity:** Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

An emergency measure, Operation Early Dawn, has been activated by the UK Ministry of Justice to address severe overcrowding in prisons. This measure, which began on Tuesday, involves delaying court hearings in magistrates' courts across England and may result in some suspects being released on bail instead of being remanded in custody.

The overcrowding crisis necessitates prioritizing which defendants are brought to court and remanded, potentially leading to extended police custody or bail for "low priority" suspects. This initiative follows a separate government decision to reduce prison sentences by up to 70 days to further alleviate overcrowding.

The Criminal Law Solicitors Association advised lawyers to refrain from attending magistrates' court without confirmation of their client's hearing to avoid unnecessary delays. This situation is expected to persist throughout the week before reassessment.

The public response includes criticism from Labour's Shadow Justice Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, and concerns from Tom Franklin, Chief Executive of the Magistrates' Association, regarding the impact on victims, witnesses, and the justice system's resources.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson acknowledged the pressures on the system but emphasized measures to manage the demand, while ensuring that dangerous offenders remain incarcerated.