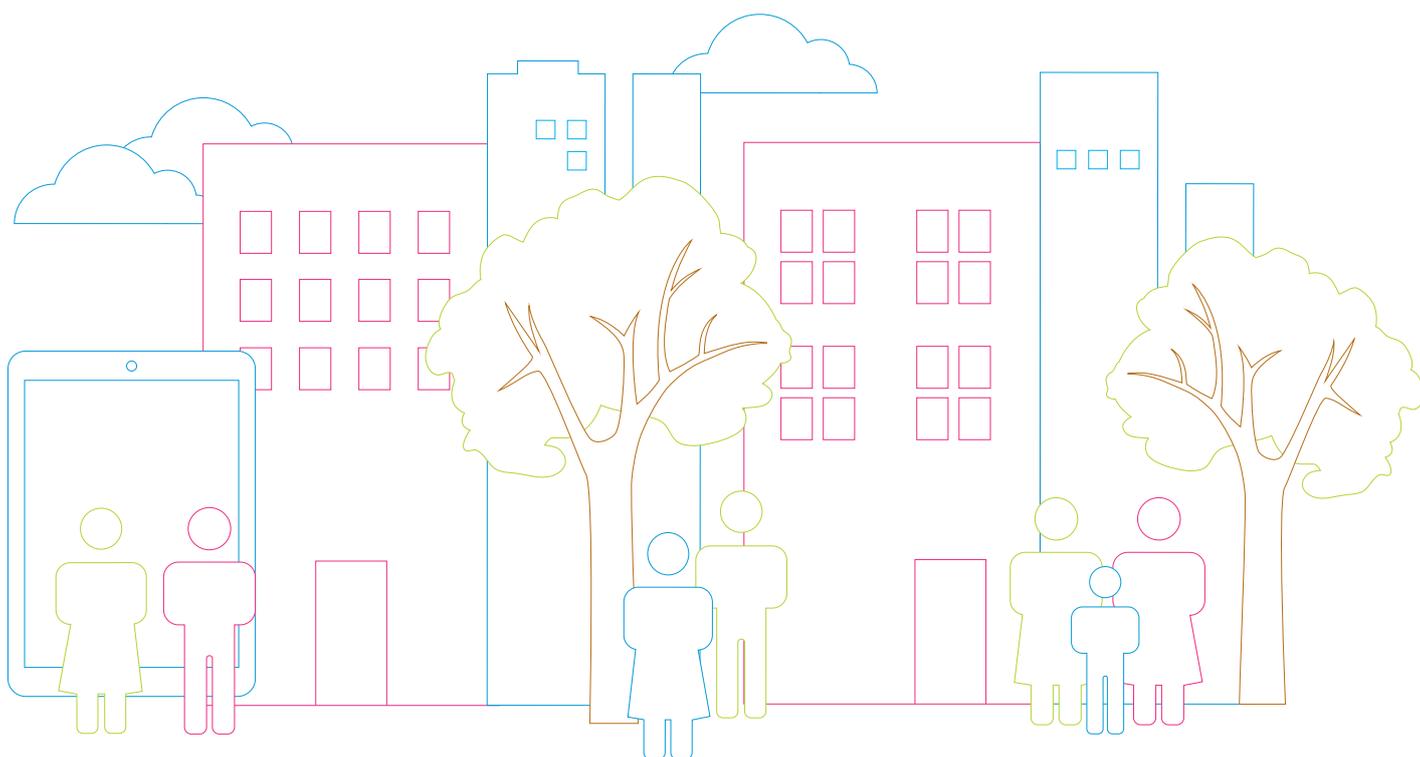




HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

Business Plan 2018-19



Foreword



"Colleagues,

What we do really matters. Justice – the ability to settle disputes of all kinds in a civilised way – is a cornerstone of our modern state. It protects our safety, our family life, and our prosperity; and it can keep us safe from arbitrary action by the state itself. Together, we play a vital role in maintaining the rule of law, supporting access to justice for all, and supporting an independent judiciary in the administration of justice. That is what we do and it could not matter more.

We are now into the second year of our reform programme, and I am more convinced than ever both that we need it and that we can make it work. We need it because HMCTS is full of dedicated people working hard, but the whole is still less than the sum of the parts; and our systems, processes and ways of working don't match the passion and commitment of our people. We also need it because we owe it to all those who touch the system – who often come to us at difficult points in their lives. We can and we should take advantage of what technology can offer, and think completely differently about how we make justice accessible. And I know that we can make it work because we have begun, and begun well.

But reform is not the answer to everything. There are areas where we need to act sooner to respond to urgent or critical need, and this business plan brings together reform with our work to improve the system today.

At the heart of our strategy are the needs and wishes of the people that we serve. What they tell us is important, and what we must always strive to deliver, is a service that is fair, humane and responsive, accessible, efficient and swift, and seamless.

To do this, we are focussing on three areas, as set out in Justice Matters:

- The right number of well-trained people in whom we invest properly, and whose outstanding commitment we value and build on;
- Modern systems and processes, underpinned with great technology; and
- Fewer, better buildings that suit the new ways of working fit for purpose

So what do I want from you? Every day, together, we are ensuring that our courts and tribunals system continues to lead and inspire the world, and meets the needs of all those we serve in the 21st century.

As we do that, I want you to be **open** to the changes we are making, be involved in designing them and own them. That doesn't mean being uncritical – I want you to challenge and propose improvements for how we can do things better. I want you to work **together** as much as possible – learning from and spreading each others' good practice. I want you to stay close to your **humanity** – putting yourself in others' shoes, for those who use our courts or our colleagues who work in them. And finally, never forget our **purpose** – what we are here to do, and why it matters."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Acland-Hood'.

Susan Acland-Hood

Chief Executive, HM Courts & Tribunals Service

Our role

HM Courts and Tribunals Service is responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales, and non-devolved tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

HMCTS operates on the basis of a partnership between the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals. Its aim is to run an efficient and effective courts and tribunals system, enabling the rule of law to be upheld, and providing access to justice for all.

We are an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice. Every year, we handle more than 2 million criminal cases, 1.8 million civil claims, 150,000 family law disputes, almost 800,000 tribunal cases and we collect over £440m of fines imposed by courts.

Our 15,000 people working in around 349 courts, tribunals and national centres, play a vital role in maintaining the rule of law, supporting access to justice for all, and providing support to an independent judiciary in the administration of justice.

We provide the system of support, including infrastructure and resources, for the administration of the courts in England and Wales and those tribunals throughout the UK, for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible. The agency provides the support necessary to enable the judiciary, tribunal members and magistracy to exercise their judicial functions independently.

Delivering a world-class justice system

HMCTS is in the second year of our ambitious six-year programme to reform the courts and tribunals system. Together, we are changing how we work to ensure that our justice system continues to lead and inspire the world, and works better for everyone, from judges and legal professionals, to witnesses, litigants and the vulnerable victims of crime. Working closely with the judiciary, we have already made a lot of progress:

- ✓ We have rolled-out the digital case system to the Crown Court, saving us from printing more than 68 million pages of paper, which stacked on top of each other would be higher than Mount Fuji.
- ✓ The Single Justice Service's 'make a plea online service' is now operational in all 44 traffic courts nationally, with around 1,500 people each week pleading online for non-imprisonable motoring offences; cutting the transaction cost for every plea made by 65%.
- ✓ We have launched intuitive digital services in civil money claims, divorce, probate, social security and child support.
- ✓ Our online civil money claims service is saving individuals and businesses time and effort through digitisation; on average a paper claim takes around 15 days from receipt to issue, whereas the online application takes around 7-8 minutes to complete and claims are issued instantaneously.

- ✓ The time to complete our online divorce application is on average 35 minutes quicker than the paper form, and the rejection rate of applications has fallen from 40% with the old paper process to less than 1%.
- ✓ Our online 'help with fees' service, with its simpler to understand application form, continues to make it easier for people on low incomes to get help with paying their court or tribunal fee and reducing the number of applications sent back. Users may not have to pay a fee, or may get some money off.
- ✓ Since the launch of the online probate service, more than 2,000 successful payments have been taken, equating to £424,000; the digital service takes around 9 days to process compared with the current 28 days under the paper-based process.
- ✓ Our new 'Track My Appeal' service allows vulnerable users appealing social security and child support decisions to check progress via email and SMS.
- ✓ Members of the public can now submit an appeal online to the tax tribunal. The appeal is then considered by a judge and, if appropriate, proceeds to a hearing.
- ✓ The pilot of a new payment tool across civil, family and tribunals, allowing users to pay fees online quickly and early.
- ✓ Our new digital platform for low level offences has allowed Transport for London to prosecute over 6,000 cases for fare evasion, saving over 380 miles overall and 2 hours weekly in transportation costs, giving rapid certainty to all those involved.
- ✓ Digital Mark Up is now rolled out across all magistrates' courts in the country, with on average 14,500 cases processed each week across more than 150 sites.
- ✓ We have laid the foundations of an online court and are rolling out enabling technology such as Wi-Fi available in more than 80 Civil, Family and Tribunal hearing centres as well as all criminal and combined courts. More than 60,000 legal professionals are connecting to Wi-Fi in our courts every week.
- ✓ 125,000 cases were heard involving the use of video link last year, a 150% increase since 2013.

In summary, this first stage of our reform programme has seen us successfully lay the foundations for the significant changes to the system that are to follow.

Our pilots mean we now have digital services available across every jurisdiction, and in the next phase of our plans, between now and January 2019, we will scale up these early services to deliver sustainable national change.

We are constantly testing and improving the way we are working to deliver reform itself; and the programme is subject to full and independent assurance from HM Treasury, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and the Cabinet Office.

Our strategy

Our programme of change is ambitious and wide-ranging. As we deliver it, we must also continue to focus on improving our service for everyone who uses it today. The further we go in reforming the system, the more our reform work and our day-to-day work will merge into one; and so it makes sense to set a strategy that brings both together.

Our strategy for improving HMCTS and delivering a world class justice system brings together our reform programme with our work to improve the system here and now.

At the heart of our strategy, and the work that we do to deliver our plans, are the needs of the people we serve. We have built our strategy around five characteristics we want the system to have, in the eyes of those who use it:

Fair "It was fair – and it felt fair"	Humane & Responsive "You understood; you treated me properly; you listened"	Accessible "I could get justice and it wasn't complicated"	Swift & Efficient "You didn't waste my time; your systems worked"	Seamless "The different bits of the system fitted together well for me"
Just	Accessible		Proportionate	
Purpose	Humanity	Openness		Together

These values reflect the shared vision of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice, and the Senior President of Tribunals for HMCTS to promote the rule of law and provide a fair justice system.

Both in our reform programme and in the work we do every day, we have three areas of activity that help us do our work – our people, our systems and processes, and our estate. We want:

1. **The right number of better-trained people in whom we invest properly, and whose outstanding commitment we value and build on**
2. **Modern systems and processes, underpinned with great technology**
3. **Fewer, better buildings and settings that suit our new ways of working**

Our strategy can be expressed by mapping our three areas of focus (people, systems and processes, and buildings) against those things that we know people want and need when they touch the system.

We can also distinguish between things that fix issues you would expect to see in any well-functioning system, and those that give us wholly new capabilities – the 'good basics' as opposed to the 'cutting edge'.

All of this is brought together in the tables that follow.

Our people and culture

Our long-term plans will transform our skills and the way people work in HMCTS; and there are some clear priorities now to make sure we support people well through change and help them be ready for the future:

		Fair	Humane & Responsive	Accessible	Swift & Efficient	Seamless
People and Culture	Good Basic	Effective support for judiciary; high quality work under delegated powers	Culture of humanity and responsiveness Great people service skills	Our people understand the system and can guide others through it	The right number of people trained well in the systems and processes they use, supported by strong leadership	The right relationships at local, regional and national levels, in order to work together as one
	Cutting Edge	New case officer roles as part of strong legal progression routes	Advanced skills in behavioural insight and use of feedback to improve performance, process and the user experience	First class Assisted Digital support	Embed outstanding digital and commercial skills Self-improving as a whole organisation, continuously agile	

Our long-term aims are to:

- Deliver excellent training for new systems and processes; and in people service skills, as well as digital and commercial skills
- Develop and strengthen our culture of humanity and responsiveness (and have more time to serve people well)
- Provide new roles and ways of working – including case officer roles with delegated powers – and strong legal progression career routes

Our priorities now are to:

- Reduce the time taken to hire staff, and have an active, clear retention strategy to help us keep our best and most experienced people through change
- Use the new 'HMCTS promise' to put renewed focus on our responsiveness to the people we serve, changing how we respond to feedback to improve our service
- Invest in leadership skills at all levels, giving us leaders, ready for now and for the future, who are able to lead through change to get there
- Invest in learning and development opportunities that ready us for change and ensure that we support staff well through career transition routes
- Work closely with the judiciary in thinking about future judicial ways of working

Users of the courts and tribunals can expect changes in the way we deliver our services. We will:

- Continue to develop plans to create Courts & Tribunals Service Centres which will provide a more effective and efficient service for people who need to access the justice system
- Introduce a new complaints and feedback system that will help us deliver what our users want and need
- Make improvements in the experience for victims and witnesses and in how we communicate with the people
- Develop our support offering to users of our products, providing assisted digital support, ensuring that we maintain access to justice for all users

Our systems, processes and technology

Our change programme will transform our systems and processes to deliver what users want and need and, working closely with the judiciary, there are also things we can and should do now to meet the same goals:

		Fair	Humane & Responsive	Accessible	Swift & Efficient	Seamless
Systems, Processes and Technology	Good Basic	Consistency The most serious failures (unlawful detention, release in error, dangerous sharing of details) 'designed out'		Simplification Clear, timely information & help through the most appropriate channels	Efficient, consistent administration Proportionate tools for the job	Things don't fall through cracks
	Cutting Edge	Clear, transparent and shareable data on justice outcomes	Systems that drive change from feedback	Wholly new routes to justice (including the online court)		Much greater end-to-end visibility (e.g. through the Common Platform) for the right people

Our long-term aims are to:

- Have efficient, quick digital systems that allow us to 'design out' failure, simplify, join up, and generate data
- Provide new routes to justice, like the online court
- Have better data that we can use to improve what we do (and have the tools to use it easily)
- Provide really clear, easy to use services with help on the phone, online/webchat or face-to-face if needed

Our priorities now are to:

- Identify and act more effectively on our most significant causes of serious operational failure and risk, with a new 'Operational Assurance team' to drive and check progress
- Enable the sharing of national best practice, moving towards more common processes
- Design and deliver new ways of working across all jurisdictions, including through progress on video hearings and scheduling and listing
- Keep improving our processes and performance, and in particular:
 - Working with the judiciary to deliver prioritised improvements in civil, family, Social Security and Child Support Tribunals and Employment Tribunals
 - Supporting and improving Digital Mark Up and Digital Case System as live services
 - Implementing and rolling out section 28 (which allows intimidated and vulnerable witnesses to give evidence on video) and digital summons for jurors
- Continue developing enhancements and upgrades to current court digital applications and deliver new products to support more digital working

Users of the courts and tribunals can expect new services and digital processes. We will:

- Expand the Single Justice Service to TV licensing prosecutions as well as introduce online plea for Transport for London cases, enabling cases to be processed quickly online rather than on paper
- Complete national roll out of digital summons for jurors enabling people to respond to summons for jury service online, cutting out paper and delay
- Deliver a digital end to end service for applications to legally end a marriage or civil partnership and resolve financial issues, probate services, and for social security and child support appeal applications - replacing the current paper-based process
- Enable citizens to resolve civil money claims under £10k, in a simple end to end digital service that is both streamlined and automated

Our buildings and settings

On buildings, in the longer term, we will have fewer, better buildings which allow us to work more effectively; and there's action we can take now to make our buildings better and more effective:

		Fair	Humane & Responsive	Accessible	Swift & Efficient	Seamless
Buildings	Good Basic	Buildings suitable for their purpose	Secure, pleasant, safe buildings	Can get there, get in and get around, at a time that's convenient	Really effective utilisation; not spending money on buildings we don't need	Sharing space in collaboration with the right partners
	Cutting Edge	Redesigned buildings to support wholly new routes to justice (and the open justice around these routes); as well as better administration (Courts and Tribunals Service Centres)				

Our long-term aims are to:

- Use our buildings more effectively, and keep them in better condition, by ensuring we have the right number of buildings in the right places
- Have redesigned buildings that are fit for purpose to support wholly new routes for justice and the new ways that we work within them
- Share space with the right partners to make access to justice more seamless

Our priorities now are to:

- Deliver visible and tangible improvements in court buildings
- Complete the survey programme that will give us a true picture of the whole estate's condition and allow us to spend where it is most needed
- Continue to make sure that we are using buildings as effectively as possible, through work to optimise hearing capacity, and through closures and amalgamations of buildings to allow us to focus funding on those we need for the future

Our buildings will be well maintained and we will:

- Continue improvement works to our court and tribunal estate through our Building Survey programme
- Publish a Court and Tribunal Guide which will set minimum standards for efficient court and tribunal building design, helping users who need to attend hearings
- Optimise our hearing capacity through closures and amalgamations of buildings to allow us to better focus funding on those buildings we need for the future

The reform programme does not cover communications or some finance processes; improvements to these need to be made alongside reform.

Data that tells us about what we care about; and allows us to drive improvement and track the impact of change

- We are accelerating work to give us better management information (MI) well before the end of reform, to help us run the business better now:
- We have brought in new tools that allow us to present our MI better. It allows users to see the trends as well as the exceptions, and drill down into what's really driving performance in HMCTS.
- We are developing the metrics and indicators that HMCTS needs to measure and improve our services. As well as the corporate metrics needed to run the business, we will measure the experience that our users have of our services, the effort (cost and time) that users expend, and their perception of our services.
- We will bring together data from our new and reformed services as well as existing systems to provide a complete view of the service that HMCTS provides.

Commercial and Finance practice and data that allows us to put our money where it will make the most difference

- Continuing to improve our management of financial resources, ensuring it supports new structures and ways of working, and by developing a unit costing model that helps us put our money in the right places.
- Strengthening our commercial capabilities and ways of working, embedding strong business skills across the organisation and building better networks with specialists. For example, we will track contracts better so that we can plan properly for their replacement and build a better supplier management function.

Communications and stakeholder engagement that brings people with us and build our reputation, licencing us to do more

- Stepping up our communications work through clear, consistent messaging and content, for both internal and external audiences.
- Targeted communications and activity with the judiciary as well as legal professionals, parliamentary stakeholders and other user groups.

Monitoring performance

Each quarter, updates on progress made against our priorities will be presented to the HMCTS Board. Development of Directorate Delivery Plans will contribute to this to ensure priorities and milestones are reviewed as we progress through the year.

HMCTS will also measure performance through key performance indicators. These are split across the various jurisdictions to ensure we take into account the differences in services required and delivered. KPIs are monitored against the following areas of the business:

- Operations – we will continue to monitor timeliness of cases progressing through the system, caseloads and utilisation of sitting days.
- User Experience – measures include monitoring complaints, call waiting times and answering official correspondence
- Financial Stewardship – we will monitor our expenditure, identifying savings and ensuring good stewardship of taxpayer's money
- People – we have targets to improve the time taken to hire new staff, monitor staff turnover and working days lost through sickness

Additional metrics, developed through the Enterprise Performance Framework (EPF) project will also be introduced. These metrics will help to measure the impact of reform and to assure that we are meeting the principles of just, proportionate and accessible services. These new metrics cover three areas:

- Effort – how hard is it for people to use our services? How long did it take and how much did it cost?
- Experience – do we do what we say we will, and fix it effectively if we don't?
- Perception – what do people think and feel about our services?

The new areas will mean we can improve our ability to drive evidence-based business improvement and track the delivery of business and user benefits through reform.

We will have a consistent framework for use across HMCTS jurisdictions, although each HMCTS service has specific needs and requirements within this framework. The immediate priorities for the EPF project are completion of the framework design, helping build new measures into operational management, and developing the business case for investment approval.