



Companies House

business plan 2019 to 2020

A glowing lightbulb is positioned vertically on the right side of the cover, partially overlapping the text. The lightbulb is illuminated, with a warm yellow glow emanating from it, and its reflection is visible on the surface below.



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Companies House is an Executive Agency of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.

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ministerial foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Companies House Business Plan for 2019-2020, setting out key activities, targets and financial forecasts for the coming year.

In the past year Companies House has initiated a programme of transformation that will touch all aspects of its work, ensuring that as an organisation it is fit for the future, and delivers a regulatory framework for corporate entities that maintains the high standards we need and expect in the UK.

To facilitate this, I look forward to working with Companies House on a broad package of reform designed to deliver an optimum business environment in future years, while at the same time Companies House will also be working towards major transparency initiatives in the reform of Limited Partnerships and the registration of beneficial ownership of overseas entities.

Lord Henley

introduction

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Companies House plays a pivotal role in providing the environment that makes the UK a great place to do business. We have achieved high digital take up of our services for providing and searching company information, and those services achieve high customer satisfaction. We have led the way in providing an open and transparent company register. The information on the register is searched billions of times a year to support the making of millions of business decisions and is also used every day by UK and overseas law enforcement, by civil society, and by citizens.

Fulfilling our role in the corporate framework of the UK demands first and foremost a companies register that is fit for purpose. The requirement for the register to contain up to date and complete information is fundamental, but this is not enough: We have to be confident, and ensure that others can be confident, in the quality of that information, ensuring it's reliable and accurate as well as up to date. We also have to balance demands for increased transparency with competing demands for privacy.

We have achieved a lot, but we cannot stand still: the environment in which we operate is changing and we must respond to that and anticipate further change to ensure that we are fit for the future. Our vision is of a Companies House where brilliant people use brilliant systems to deliver brilliant services. A central component of this vision is a companies register built upon relevant and accurate information, ensuring that the UK is a trusted place to do business and continues to lead on corporate transparency.

Some of the changes we want to make will need the backing of legislation, but others are already within our grasp. To turn this vision into reality, this year will see the first deliveries from our Transformation Programme, taking the first steps in our journey to becoming a brilliant transformed organisation.

key statistics

2 |



NUMBER OF SEARCHES

5,639,215,868

/////////
DIGITAL TAKE-UP

88%

/////////
NUMBER OF
TRANSACTIONS
PROCESSED

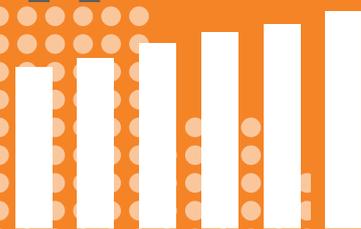
NUMBER OF
INCORPORATIONS

658,000

NUMBER OF
DISSOLUTIONS

500,000

4.16 million
companies on
the register



our corporate targets

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Our corporate targets monitor the things that will ensure that we continue to deliver on our core role while at the same time progressing our transformation.

They focus on the things that matter most: our customers, our register, our services and our workforce, measuring and valuing that which will make a real difference. Some of our targets are therefore about new things, whilst others are about maintaining the standards we have established.

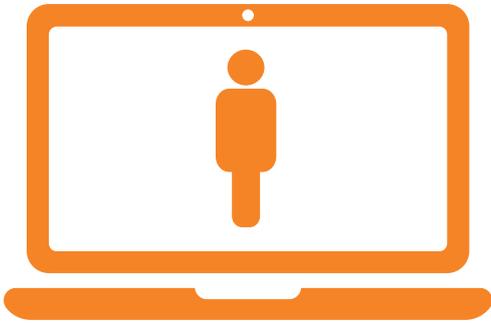


ACCOUNTS FILING JOURNEY



Deliver digital services that transform the end to end accounts filing journey

SECURE PERSON DIGITAL SERVICE



Provide a digital service to enable someone at risk to apply for their personal data to be protected

REDUCE COSTS

3.5%



Reduce the cost of our baseline activities by 3.5%

COMPLIANCE



97%

Ensure that 97% of companies have an up to date confirmation statement



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

83%

Achieve a customer satisfaction rate of 83%

OUR SERVICES



Ensure that our digital services are available 99.9% of the time

10%

Increase job applications from underrepresented groups by 10%

Ensure that our people understand, and are engaged with, our purpose and vision



our role in government

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As an executive agency of the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Companies House has an important role to play in delivering departmental policy and in particular in contributing to delivery of the Government's Industrial Strategy through a range of activities.

We have already contributed to making the UK an easy place to do business and ensured that our register is open and easily accessible. Our company register is one of the most up to date and accessible in the world, but we recognise that more can be done to increase confidence in the accuracy of the information we publish. The transformed services we will start to deliver this year will provide simple ways for our customers to deliver on their obligations, but we will also investigate ways to deter and prevent those who seek to file fraudulently.

Whilst the UK regulatory framework is generally well regarded, we are aware of concerns about potential for misuse. Areas of growing concern include use of UK corporate entities to facilitate economic crime, the filing of false information, and the use of innocent people's information on the companies register to commit fraud and other harm. Recognising that we currently have limited powers to address issues like this and to remove information that is false or fraudulent, we will, during the coming year, continue to work with colleagues in BEIS. We will investigate ways to safeguard against abuse of the register by the minority whilst making it as simple as possible for the law abiding majority to fulfil obligations to us so that they can confidently concentrate on running their businesses.

As well as working with colleagues in BEIS we will continue to work with colleagues in wider government and in law enforcement to understand the changes we need to make and how they can further benefit from our information. We have long established working relationships with other government bodies, having

delivered joint services and communication. We will continue to collaborate as we engage and communicate with those users and stakeholders we hold in common and seek to understand how we can best provide services, lower burdens and reduce duplication where we share a common user base.

We are focused on enhancing the value of our information through a closer partnership between Companies House and UK Law Enforcement bodies. We recognise a clear division of responsibilities, under which Companies House rapidly responds to law enforcement requests for data, research and analysis and, through improved targeting, proactively provides more useful intelligence on possible suspicious activities to appropriate law enforcement contacts. During the next year we will make changes and undertake proofs of concept that will further enhance the UK business environment as we seek ways to strengthen the UK's ability to fight economic crime whilst minimising burdens on law abiding companies.

Companies House also has a role to play internationally where we are viewed in many ways as leaders in company registration: We have longstanding and close links with other company registries and use this network to share our own, and benefit from others', experience and expertise. Our relationships, and attendance at conferences and other gatherings, give us opportunities to showcase the work we do. These opportunities, and visits from other registries and international organisations, allow us to share and celebrate excellent practice and to explain and promote UK objectives. We are always interested in understanding what contributes to other registries being seen as leading in different areas and understanding what we can learn from this.

A decision in 2018 that Companies House should be classified as part of central government (rather than our current classification as a Trading Fund) will inevitably impact on how we operate. In preparation for our transition to being part of central government from April 2020 we will, in tandem with our other activities for the year, make the changes needed and will actively engage with stakeholders to prevent any undesirable impacts.

our register

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Our register is central to our role in the UK's corporate framework. In maintaining a register that is fit for purpose we strive for balance in areas that are in tension and impacted by our external environment. In particular we seek ways to ensure the right balance between transparency and privacy, and to ensure completeness and accuracy whilst minimising burdens on business.

In the coming year our activities will focus on the changes we are able to make within our current legislative framework, and on continuing to ensure that our register is complete and up to date by maintaining our programme of compliance and enforcement activity. Having introduced the PSC (People with Significant Control) regime in April 2016, this year will also see a review of the effectiveness of the regime from the perspective of all stakeholders.

Making sure we have the right balance between transparency and privacy

The application process for someone who is at risk to protect personal information will be transformed to a digital service that provides a modern user-friendly service for our people, our customers and our enforcement partners.

Making sure our register is complete and up to date

One of the first new services to be developed under our Transformation Programme will transform our prosecution processes and interaction with courts, boosting accuracy, efficiency and capacity and providing for the first time a digital interface with court services. This in turn will give additional capacity for prosecutions, and further improve compliance, in the future.

We recognise that to further improve accounts compliance and take-up of our digital services we need to consider all aspects of the customer journey around filing of accounts. Having focused in previous years on reminders and the digital filing of accounts, this year we will start to introduce digital services to cover other parts of the journey. Whilst our aim will always be to ensure accounts are filed on time, we will introduce services for the few who need them to request an extension and to enable those who do incur a late filing penalty to pay it online.

Making sure our register data is reliable and accurate

In parallel to delivery of new services we will all also take steps to investigate the feasibility and desirability of other potential changes: we will be working on options for better identifying suspicious activity and for further ensuring the integrity as well as the completeness of data on the register. A major part of this will be to carry out proofs of concept and understanding how our data infrastructure can support this.



our customers

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Our customers have a central role to play as we transform our services. We look to them for insight, initially to identify their diverse needs, and as we develop to ensure that we are meeting those needs and developing services that are simple and intuitive.

We support a range of customers and hence a range of needs. Some of the new services we will introduce this year, and the majority we are transforming, relate to companies as customers needing to maintain their information on our register or send us other information. For this group, we aim for our transformed services to design out error, making life easier for our customers by enabling them to get it right first time with a minimum of effort. This year we will be concentrating on new digital services within the end to end accounts journey and for those applying for their information to be protected. At the same time we will also be laying the foundation for the transformation of our existing high volume transactions through research and planning future development.

On the search side, our customers include businesses and individuals who rely on the information on our register to make business decisions. Others include those in law enforcement seeking information on companies and individuals. Although different, these groups have a shared need for information that is complete and reliable, and so both will benefit from the work we undertake on our register over the year.

Customer satisfaction

We will continue to hold customer satisfaction as a fundamental indicator of how well we are doing. Having reviewed our existing methodology we believe that we can improve how we measure to produce results that are more consistent and more meaningfully reflect customer satisfaction.

Next year we will therefore discontinue the annual survey we have previously used to get a measure of customer satisfaction and instead measure continually via an internally operated survey providing a weighted average score as used by the Institute of Customer Service. This will allow us to provide a real-time customer satisfaction metric using a much greater sample size, providing greater value and customer insight we can act on in year.

There are many factors that contribute to our customer satisfaction and to dissatisfaction. Addressing some of these will, as in the area of our register data, require the backing of legislation, but others will be addressed this year. Privacy

for those who need it is a constant concern for some of our customers, with others being concerned that information should be accessible to those who need it. This year will see a review of the PSC regime which will consider views of all stakeholders and a range of perspectives. Our whole range of customers will benefit from improved interactions as a product of our ongoing quality initiatives.

The Institute of Customer Services (ICS) is the UK's independent professional body for customer service. Supported by colleagues from our coaching network, some of our staff are currently undertaking the ICS qualifications, which are nationally recognised. The qualifications will highlight the importance of delivering excellent customer service and help develop our people to provide it. During the next year we will continue to roll out this qualification programme across our customer service team.

Digital capability and take-up

The additional services we introduce this year will further enhance our digital capability and move us towards customers being able to undertake every journey digitally. As we introduce those new services and re-engineer existing ones our expectation is that improved and enhanced services will attract more customers, increasing our digital take-up rate.

our systems and services

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Our digital services have enabled us to make strides forward in digital delivery and take-up and achieve high customer satisfaction. They are however ageing, and our transformation demands that we undertake a programme of replacement, enhancement and expansion, focused around the needs of customers both external and internal.

Our Transformation Programme will be the vehicle for delivering new services that are developed on modern technology. Development will focus on the needs of our customers, ensuring services are easy and intuitive to use, so reducing scope for error and maximising efficiency. Redesign will explore the use of artificial intelligence and other technologies to identify transactions with a higher risk of criminal activity, all these factors combining to support the UK remaining a good place to set up a business.

Programme delivery will be split into phases, with the first and current phase focussing on delivering building blocks and capabilities for future use. We have already begun to develop services on our new technology platform and as a fundamental in this year we will undertake the due diligence needed to ensure that that platform is stable and can support our ambitious plans for it. This year will see a period of intense digital activity as we develop and roll out the initial service deliveries that are vital to our Transformation Programme. At the same time, we will prepare ourselves to sustain this intense effort over the coming years of transformation. We are committed both to the successful delivery of new services and to maintaining standards of delivery for our current services until these are replaced.

We will deliver a new digital strategy aligned to our transformation ambitions. As part of this we will seek external validation of our technical approach and work with partners to continue to get external validation in other vital areas.

Our development is iterative and focused on user need: at all stages we engage with potential users of services to gain the insight and feedback that will influence future development. Engagement extends to end customers as users of the services and also to wider government to ensure alignment with objectives and to identify areas where we can share insight, experience and developments.

Whilst focusing on delivery in year we will also prepare for future developments, researching the need, and laying the foundations, for coming deliveries. We will for example carry out proofs of concept to understand what is possible in further automating validation and in verifying identity. We will put in place a roadmap showing the core components we will develop, for multiple uses in our future services, taking into account where these already exist such as in Government as a Platform services.

In all aspects a central tenet will be that we are undertaking true transformation and not simply replatforming and refreshing technology. Our aim during our transformation is to ensure that any and every journey can be carried out digitally. This year will see us make real progress towards that as we introduce new services around the accounts journey, the ability for people at risk to apply digitally for protection of personal information, and our internal and external prosecution processes.

We take an end to end view of services, transforming them internally as well as externally. Our range of services will include not only those visible to our customers but increased digital services to support our business, like people analytics, performance management and recruitment.

our people and the way we work

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Our people have a vital role to play in achieving our transformation. Whilst changes to systems, services and processes are all needed, there is also an array of change to be delivered in the way that Companies House is structured as an organisation, the roles people play, and the skills and environment that will ensure success. Using a range of communication and engagement techniques we will provide avenues for employee voice and use every opportunity to align individuals and teams with our purpose, vision and targets. We aim to increase the diversity of our workforce and at the same time our diversity of thinking.

Diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion is a core theme in all our work. We have made significant progress in some areas: we are leading the way on disability related initiatives, for example in the field of mental health support, and have also focused on gender inequalities and increased declaration rates. However, we want to do better and will focus particularly on activities that will create a more diverse and inclusive working environment. As part of our commitment to Dignity at Work we will ensure this underpins our policies and processes and provide appropriate refresher training for all. Recognising that our attraction and recruitment rates for underrepresented groups are relatively low, improving this will be a priority for us during the year. We will use analytics and innovative approaches to develop and implement a recruitment strategy that focusses on attracting high quality candidates from diverse backgrounds with a view to addressing imbalances in our workforce.

Our culture and engagement

We recognise that our transformation cannot be successful without an engaged workforce and a culture that drives, and supports us in, making the changes we need. Culture has therefore been in the forefront of preparing for our transformation, looking to not only take people with us but to listen to them and encourage and enable them to lead and deliver change that counts, however small.

We have articulated a desired culture in which our people are adaptable, bold and curious and are harnessing a community of culture champions to bring this to life, role modelling and communicating the change required. We will recruit, reward and recognise to reinforce the mindset, skills and behaviours necessary to successfully deliver transformation.

At this vital time for our transformation we will focus on ensuring everyone in Companies House is engaged, and understands our organisational purpose and the contribution they make to our success. We will measure our success in this through the annual Civil Service People Survey, and this year will aim for a score in this area in the upper quartile.

Ability to adapt will be crucial. We aim to be a lean organisation in tune with changing customer behaviours and needs and unencumbered by a 'the way it has always been done' mentality. We want to be better able to see available opportunities, innovate and react on them in real time. As we move to a truly digital Companies House, we will need to adapt to new ways of working and be able to take advantage of what technology can offer us.

Our People

In the coming year we will establish and invest in the new skills that will be needed. Resilience, and the ability to lead and adapt to change will be essential. New skills will also be needed to support the future reliability and accuracy of our register, ensuring our people are able and empowered to take a more considerative and investigative approach. In line with changes to our systems, services and organisational structure, we will make sure that we develop and recruit the right individuals with the right skills at the right time.

Over the year we will undertake a full review of our performance management approach to ensure that this too supports our transformation and reflects best practice. Our focus will be on developing manager capability and employee accountability through a range of blended development interventions.

Underpinning this will be strategic workforce planning and strategic resourcing. We will ensure, facilitated by enhanced HR systems and analytics, that we can best manage and deploy our workforce. Allied with this, the ability to scale our operations and support functions up or down much faster will increase our agility and ability to respond to change. We will identify future talent and, where we need to recruit, do so to support our target culture and reflect the diversity of the community around us.



Our organisational structure

During the past year we have been investigating options for a future structure that will underpin our future transformed organisation. Of the many models available we believe that we will best be able to deliver and allow people to flourish through a model based around our services. This will afford a balance between allowing owners of services to provide maximum value from the resources available to them while maintaining corporate direction and coherence. We believe that this new structure has potential to deliver multiple benefits to Companies House performance, our customers and stakeholders as well as improving the wellbeing of our people.

Ultimately, we foresee a Companies House where duplication of effort is dramatically reduced and resources allocated as efficiently as possible. Clear procedures and authority will make for faster decision making and transparent delegations of authority will decrease the likelihood and severity of risk. Focus on services will allow us to be in tune with changing customer needs and behaviours and see available opportunities, innovate and react to them in real time. As we move to a truly digital Companies House, we will need to adapt to new ways of working and be able to take advantage of what technology can offer. Our new structure will enable us to scale our operations and support functions up or down much faster with increasing agility and ability to respond to change.

Moving away from our current structures will demand substantial change. To make sure we properly test our thinking and understand the challenges as well as the benefits, we will start small and ensure we learn lessons as we go. We will also ensure engagement throughout the process, ensuring that everyone understands their role and is ready for change. In the first half of the year we will initiate a phased implementation of a service model structure, starting with a few selected areas. This will then inform how we proceed in the future. In parallel with this we will undertake a review of our supporting corporate services to determine how best to structure these to complement the service model.

Our working environment

In the coming year we will focus on creating working environments to drive organisational productivity and stimulate innovation, where collaboration, curiosity and flexibility are the norm, and where we can attract and retain employees and become an employer of choice. We will harness the opportunities available from emerging technologies to create flexible working environment that enhance user experience and increase our cost-efficiency to contribute to Companies House efficiency targets.

Whilst we expect to see an increase in flexibility through virtual and remote working we cannot ignore our physical environment: we will continue to develop our estate, taking into account the need to enhance the environment and security for both staff and customers. The opportunities and challenges afforded by new ways of working will influence how we use our physical space and maintain a focus on sustainability and our carbon footprint. All of these factors will contribute towards our being well positioned to be a potential mini hub for government in the future.

finance

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Companies House trading fund status requires us to ensure that income from fees covers all expenditure under normal operating conditions. The investment in the first tranche of our Transformation Programme activities and other improvements planned for this year will need to draw on our reserves in addition to our fees income.

At the end of 2019 – 2020 we will transition from a Trading Fund to central government. Our change of status will affect some features of our operating model and the way our funding is secured and managed. We will not be able to fund future tranches of our Transformation Programme through our reserves in the same way, and we are working closely with BEIS and HM Treasury to ensure a smooth transition. The next year will see preparations for our new financial model, ensuring we have in place working practices and financial and commercial capability fit for the future.

Every year we aim to deliver an efficiency saving of 3.5%. In past years we have achieved this through a variety of routes including reaping the efficiencies of digitisation, tight cost controls and effective procurement. As we begin to introduce transformed services we expect in the coming year to begin to see efficiencies and savings from transformed services and operating processes. These will be realised in both reducing running costs of new digital services and increasing capacity in areas like prosecution.

EU Exit: Whilst Companies House is operationally prepared for a no deal Brexit, there is no funding within next year's budget for that eventuality.

Income and expenditure	
	2019/20 Proposed Budget £'000
Total income	73,419
Expenditure	
Staff and other costs	41,388
Overheads	29,455
Depreciation	5,595
Interest and dividend	3,800
Total expenditure	80,238
Retained surplus/(deficit)	(6,819)

external accreditations

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Companies House benchmarks its systems and policies against an increasing range of external standards. Benchmarking against recognised and respected standards gives us confidence that our approach has been independently assessed. From this we get indications of how well we have done in achieving the high standards we aim for, and also any weaker areas where we have further work to do.

Customer Service Excellence standard

The Government wants organisations to provide excellent services with customers at the heart of its service provision. The Customer Service Excellence Standard was developed to help deliver this. It assesses organisations against the standards, recognises achievements and identifies areas for improvement. Companies House has been successful in achieving the standard with many areas of excellence highlighted. We will have our annual assessment in quarter 3.

Environmental standard ISO14001:2015

Companies House has proudly held the ISO 14001 Environmental Standard since 2002. This internationally recognised standard provides a framework, so that Companies House can develop, implement and manage an effective Environmental Management System (EMS) to responsibly manage our impact on the environment. We are assessed against it annually to ensure the on-going compliance and deliver continuous improvements. The intended outcomes are clearly defined, and relevant processes and procedures have been put in place to ensure our objectives are met: to protect the environment and reduce pollution; ensure continual improvement by enhancing our environmental performance, and fulfil all relevant environmental compliance obligations.

Health and safety OHSAS 18001:2007

Companies House currently holds certification to the ISO 18001 standard which Companies House has held for a number of years. Companies House is working toward attaining the new ISO 45001:2018 standard and has conducted a gap analysis to ensure we meet the criteria of the new, more robust, standard. Its purpose is to provide a framework that will underpin our Occupational Health and Safety Management System, ensuring that comprehensive processes and procedures are in place to reduce workplace risks and create improved and safer working conditions for our employees, customers and visitors.

Investors in People

We are proud to hold a gold Investors in People award. Whilst there is no reassessment this year, we will focus on developing our action plan, continuing to demonstrate the rigorous standards of our gold award. Our aim is to continually improve and to move towards platinum accreditation in 2020.

Mind

We remain focused on our commitment to improving mental health in the workplace. We have worked with Mind to develop an action plan which will guide our efforts over the next 12 months and assessment will commence in September 2019.

Cyber and information security

We have, again, maintained certification to the international security standard ISO27001 and compliance with the Payment Card Industry (PCI) standard. This year, we will continue to invest in our security resources and security of our digital services. We continue to onboard our Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) service to enhance our protective monitoring capability. This will improve the detection and management of security events on both our own network and the cloud services we utilise.

Official statistics

Companies House has been a producer of official statistics for a number of years. The Office for Statistics Regulation and the UK Statistics Authority have a published Code of Practice. The Code provides producers of official statistics with the detailed practices they must commit to when producing and releasing official statistics. Companies House official statistics are in line with these practices, ensuring that the statistics that we publish serve the public. When producers of official statistics comply with the Code, it gives users of statistics and citizens confidence that published government statistics are of public value, are high quality and are produced by people and organisations that are worthy of trust.

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